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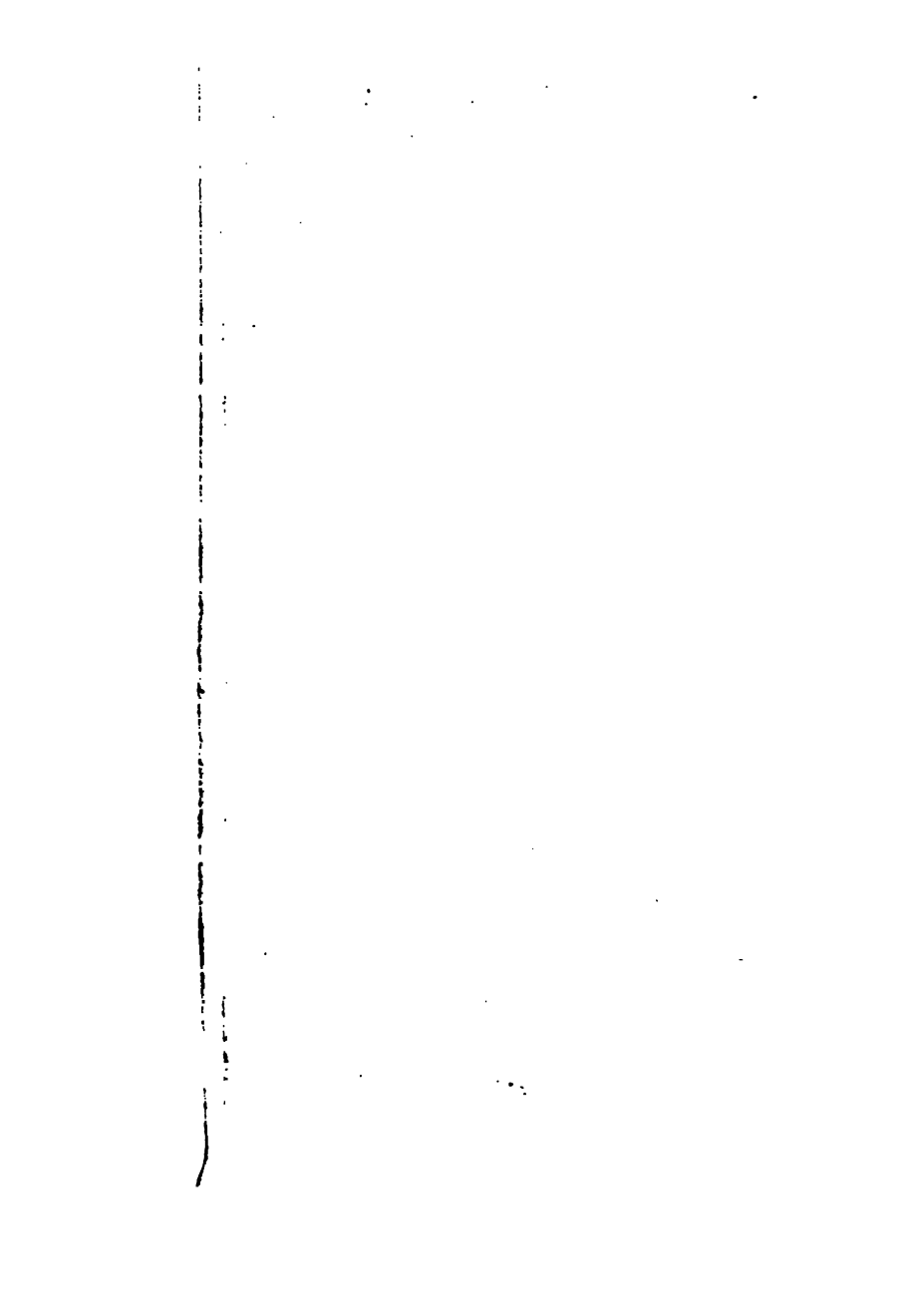
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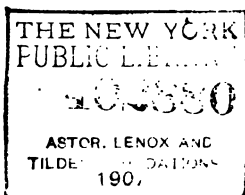
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### CORRIGENDA.

- Page 4, line 19, for "Varro," read "Varus."  
 ,, 19, ,, 30, for "board," read "broad."  
 ,, 23, last line but one, for "a di Libia," read "di Libia."  
 ,, 60, footnote, for "Litt. Em," read "Litt. En."  
 ,, 61, line 9, for "empirism," read "empiricism."  
 ,, 95, ,, 9, for "overrun," read "overran."  
 ,, 121, ,, for "whosoever," read "as many as."  
 ,, 126, ,, 21, for "former," read "first."  
 A "5" (reference to foot-note) omitted on p. 160, line 14.

## INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE death of Boëthius, in A.D. 524, closed that cycle of European literature which we distinguish by the name of Classical, and inaugurated the period popularly known as the Dark Ages. This period lasted for five centuries, and, though it bore no literary fruit, was yet, notwithstanding, not without its influence on letters, for in its darkness germinated that ancient seed from which sprang the rich harvest of modern literature. To this the history of every country in Europe testifies.

**Kelts—Iberians.**—In France, with which we have to do, the bold and enterprising Kelts, though they had to give way before the more civilised Romans, set their distinctive mark on the various Gaulish dialects, a mark which not even the later Germanic invasion could stamp out, and their language found a refuge in the north-west corner of France, from which it has not yet been driven out. Their priests or Druids, and their bards, represented the intellectual culture of the race. The former composed a powerful theocracy, the latter animated the courage of the people and enkindled their patriotism by their songs. These songs were handed down by oral

transmission, and are many of them still sung by Breton peasants. M. de la Villemarqué has transcribed one such, entitled *THE PROPHECY OF GWENCHLAN*, which, from the bitter hatred to Christianity it breathes, he ascribes, with every show of probability, to the fifth or sixth century.

In Southern Gaul, on the Pyrenean slopes, lived the uncompromising foes of the gay Kelts,—the simple, hardy Iberians. Accounts of their poems and laws in rhyme, ancient in the days of Strabo, have come down to us. A fragment of such a poem, describing a siege by Augustus, which ended victoriously for the Iberians, is still extant.<sup>1</sup>

**Influence of Greece.**—But Kelt and Iberian had to make way for the all-conquering Roman. Greece had already set up her standard of civilisation and culture at her flourishing colony of Massilia, and her sacred altars burned on Gallic soil; but for six centuries her sons had been content with the life and activity of a sea-port in close and constant communication with the mother-country, and had lived in cultivated isolation from the neighbouring barbarians on the Mediterranean shore. Greece was quietly and silently influencing the world,—Rome governed triumphantly in the sight of all men. Rome conquered by force of arms and laws,—Greece colonised by the more subtle powers of mind and culture. The arts and sciences of Greece were carried by victorious Rome into her farthest conquests, and under her domination Gaul embraced the blessing of Greek civilisation. In the time of Cæsar, the Gauls wrote their mother-tongue in Greek characters; and, in the fourth century, the people of Arles spoke Greek and Latin indifferently. Gaulish orators

<sup>1</sup> Discovered in 1590 by Ibanez de Ibarguen, published for the first time by W. Humboldt in *Mithridates*.

were heard in the Forum of Rome ; a native Latin school of literature, adorned by such men as the learned poets Valerius Cato, and Varro Atacinus, and the elegant but corrupt Petronius, sprang up in Gaul itself.

**Influence of Rome.**—Rome, as we know, fell before barbarian hordes, but still in the present day we trace the elevating influence of her rule in the amphitheatres, the aqueducts, the bridges, the roads, of south-eastern France. The last hour of her material domination came in the fifth century of the Christian era, but her civilisation was slowly and insensibly to conquer the conqueror. The Gothic, Lombard, and Carlovingian kingdoms adopted her laws. Her tongue, familiar not only to her subjects of the Italian Pensinsula, but to those of her remoter western provinces, became the language,—corrupted indeed and popularised,—of France, Spain, and Italy. Speaking of the influence of Rome on his own country, Michelet says<sup>2</sup>—“The remains of Rome in Gaul are indeed immense. The theatres, circuses, aqueducts, and roads that we still admire, are the lasting symbol of the civilisation founded by the Romans—the justification of their conquest of Gaul. Such is the force of that organisation, that at the very moment that life seems ebbing from it, and barbarians appear about to destroy it, they are forced to accept it in spite of themselves. Willingly or unwillingly they must dwell beneath those unconquerable arches which they are powerless to shake ; they must bow their heads and receive, conquerors as they are, the law of conquered Rome. The great name of empire, the idea of equality beneath a monarch, so opposed to the aristocratic principle of Germany, has been given to the world by Rome. Barbarian kings will profit by it. Cultivated by the Church, and welcomed by popular tradition, it will make its way

<sup>2</sup> HISTOIRE DE FRANCE, vol. i. p. 111.

assisted by Charlemagne and Saint Louis, and will lead us step by step to the annihilation of aristocracy, to the equality and equity of modern times."

**Influence of Germany.**—From the far North, from the frozen shores of the Arctic Seas, from fir-clad mountains, and boundless steppes, came the vast hordes which were destined to put an end to the empire of Rome. We trace their onward sweep from utmost Asia. Each halting-place became the cradle of a new people: Getæ, Goths, Lombards, Saxons, Burgundians, Scandinavians. From the scorching plains of India to the snow-covered hills of Norway, a cordon was stretched round imperial Rome, and as she grew weaker and more shrunken, the hardy and vigorous warriors pressed on.

Cæsar had dreamed of subjugating these warlike hosts, whom he knew by the name of Germans (men of war). Leader after leader had gone forth against them with varying fortunes, but always with the idea of conquest, till the disastrous defeat of Varro convinced the Romans that it would be well to rest satisfied with defending their frontier against such unconquerable foes. Little by little, as we know, the star of Roman ascendancy paled. On the 23d of August, A.D. 410, Alaric entered Rome as conqueror, and Gothic soldiers plundered the palace of the Cæsars. The emperor's daughter, Placidia, was given in marriage to Alaric's son-in-law and successor, and the kingdom of the Visigoths, with its seat of Government at Toulouse, was founded. The army of this new kingdom was the strength of the host which, forty years after, defeated Attila. The Western Empire shrank year by year, and its vast outlying provinces were parcelled out between barbarian peoples. Of these, the greater number were Germanic, and their various languages, modified and considerably varied in their different

settlements, present that incontestable unity and common origin, which learned researches in our own day have so abundantly verified. Recent philological studies have demonstrated the influence of Germanic languages on the French tongue. Diez and Ampère enumerate, exclusive of compounds and derivatives, a thousand French words borrowed from them. The slight admixture of Keltic has already been alluded to.

A writer in the *QUARTERLY REVIEW* (vol. xi.) speaks of the *Langue Romane* as "that singular language which, produced by successive and ill-defined combinations of the Latin and Celtic, had gradually spread over the whole of Gaul after the declension of the Roman power," and assigns "its first great separation into the Roman *Wallon* or *Langue d'Oil*, and the *Provençal* or *Langue d'Oc* to the accession of the Capetian race."

It would seem as if the *Provençal*, which Ducange calls "Latin unfettered by grammar or orthography," had been the general language of France until the ninth century, when it made way for the dialect of the north, which we call French. "In the middle of the eighth century," says Hallam,<sup>4</sup> "we find the rustic language mentioned as distinct from Latin. . . . In 842 we find the earliest written record of its existence, in the celebrated oaths taken by Louis of Germany and his brother Charles the Bold, as well as by their vassals, the former in Frankish or early German, the latter in their own current dialect. This, though with somewhat of a closer resemblance to Latin, is accounted by the best judges a specimen of the language spoken south of the Loire, afterwards variously called the *Langue d'Oc*, *Provençal*, or *Limousin*, and essentially the same with the dialects of Catalonia and Valencia. . . . Thus, in the eighth and

<sup>4</sup> HISTORY OF LITERATURE, vol. i. pp. 23, 24.



ninth centuries, if not before, France had acquired a language, unquestionably nothing else than a corruption of Latin (for the Celtic and Teutonic words that entered into it were by no means numerous, and did not influence its structure), but become so distinct from its parent, through modes of pronunciation, as well as grammatical changes, that it requires some degree of practice to trace the derivation of words in many instances."

In this consideration of the language of France, we must not forget the influence of the Teutonic races on her manners. The love of military glory and danger which burnt so low in the last years of the Roman Empire; the great respect for women, which had struck the historian Tacitus; and the feudal principle, so opposed to Latin ideas, unquestionably originated with them. How much the poetry of the Middle Ages owed to these new characters is abundantly evident. Another mighty influence must not be overlooked: the noble enthusiasm and high faith of Christianity. A jaded and pleasure-worn people could not understand the simple fearlessness with which mere soldiers dared to hurl defiance at an emperor's edicts, or the exulting joy with which weak women stepped on to the arena where certain death awaited them, or tender mothers stood by their children exposed to cruel torture, to bid them suffer to the end.

**Legends.**—Early Christianity endowed the soul of man with powers of heroic endurance, without robbing it of its tenderness. Imagination too, dry and sterile in the last heathen poets, gained strength and freshness in the atmosphere of a sincere faith. For some centuries *legends* formed almost all the popular poetry of Europe—dreams of the ideal in the midst of the sad realities of life. They told stories of fierce barbarians, flushed with victory, stopped in their conquering march by a simple

shepherd girl; of youthful knights slaying fierce dragons, and young girls trampling them to death; of virgins borne by loving angel hands to their graves; of rough soldiers sharing their only cloak with a shivering beggar, whom the visions of the night revealed to their glad souls as the homeless Carpenter of Nazareth. How touching are these stories when we think of the bitter sufferings they have comforted! In the midst of invasion and civil war, whilst human life seemed a prey to brute force, popular imagination consoled itself by picturing the world as its faith told it it should be. An ever-present and all-loving Providence broods over all, the power of virtue is opposed to the violence of arms, and Christian morality, driven from the earth, triumphs in these ideal pictures. Legend was the epic of the conquered, and offered a resting-place to their imagination, as the cloister did to their persons. The sentiments in their hearts when they assembled to hear these stories read, was that on Dante's lips at the monastery of Corvo, "I come seeking peace."

**Theology.**—If Christianity furnished new food to the imagination, it did it no less to the intellect. Roman civilisation in its decrepitude, had nothing to offer to the mind of man but vain combinations of frivolous ideas. Christianity opened to it a boundless field in which the great problems of philosophy presented themselves under new names. The nature of God, our relations with Him, human liberty and free-will,—those sublime researches round which the questionings of philosophers unceasingly revolve, and which each age sees from a different point of view,—were, from the second to the sixth century, discussed under the various names of Gnosticism, Arianism, and Pelagianism. The apostolic doctors engaged in the greatest undertaking that man can conceive, and set

## *History of French Literature*

hemselves to propagate *dogma*,—that is, not like the sages of antiquity, to build up at their own risk and peril individual systems to which voluntary speculation might or might not attach itself, but to express the faith of an epoch, and to embody it in a form of words which should be at once the natural consequence of evangelical premises, a legitimate satisfaction of the demands of good sense, and the moral basis of a rising society. The fathers of the Church were Christians, as well as thinkers and statesmen, and Christianity was in their day a vast intellectual republic. In spite of the difficulties of communication and the dangers of travel, questions, answers, counsels, moral treatises, dogmatic inquiries passed from people to people, and from land to land; and councils, the national assemblies of Christendom, formed the crown of the spiritual edifice. A Christian bishop, Ambrose of Milan (340–397), dared, in the last years of the fourth century, to reprove his emperor, the haughty and passionate Theodosius, and to exclude him from public worship till he should submit to public penance. This was the first notable instance of the moral authority of the clergy opposed to the temporal authority of kings; but in days of severe and bloodthirsty barbarity this clerical power grew till it became the only check to lust and cruelty; and though it sometimes stepped beyond its proper limits, it was unquestionably the one beneficent influence of the dark ages.

**Preaching.**—The principal instrument of this spiritual domination was a new style of eloquence, destined to take a high place in French literature,—the eloquence of the pulpit. The fathers of the Greek Church were remarkable for the subtlety of their discussions, the fertility of their imagination, and the stateliness of their dictation. The preaching of the Latin Church aimed at no lite

excellence; and the only thought of Western bishops and missionaries was to instruct and edify their hearers. The hundred and thirty sermons extant of S. Césaire of Arles, the most illustrious Gaulish bishop of the sixth century, are like the affectionate conversations of a father with his children. Another striking characteristic of Western preaching which must not be omitted, is the constant recurrence of the ideas of hell and damnation, and the dark pictures of the future of sinners. This arose from the necessity which weighed on gospel preachers of using the only means they possessed to check the fierce violence of barbarian conquerors. It was this characteristic which inspired that religious terror of which every mediæval imagination gives evidence, and in which the awful grandeur of the "Inferno," and even of the "Paradise Lost," had its source.

**History.**—If the clergy were the orators, they were no less the writers, of the Middle Ages. To them France owes her few rare memorials of Merovingian times, of which the most precious is the *HISTORY OF THE FRANKS*, by Gregory of Tours.<sup>5</sup> In a writing of those days it would be vain to look for the style or critical acumen of an historian, but nothing can give a more correct idea of that epoch of confusion than the vivid picture of the old chronicler: the manner of living of the Frankish kings, the interior of the royal palace, the stirring lives of the knights and bishops, the intriguing turbulence of the Gauls, and the undisciplined brutality of the Franks. His work, divided into sixteen parts, stretches from the establishment of the Franks in Gaul to the year 591—a space of

<sup>5</sup> Georgius Florentius Gregorius, born in Auvergne in 539, died in 593. The first book of his history contains a summary of universal history, from the creation of Adam to the death of S. Martin of Tours. He has left besides many hagiographical works, *LIVES OF THE FATHERS, GLORY OF THE MARTYRS, &c.*

one hundred and seventy-four years. From him a succession of five unknown chroniclers bring us to Eginhard, the worthy biographer of Charlemagne.

**Monasteries.**—The institution of monasteries had an immense influence on the future of Christian civilisation. During the five centuries of darkness and ignorance which followed on the death of Boëthius, knowledge of any sort was almost exclusively confined to ecclesiastics, so that in many countries the word *clerk* became synonymous with scholar. The principal subject of their studies was the Latin tongue, in which the Scriptures they used, and the liturgies and canons of the Church, were written. Many of these ecclesiastics, and notably Pope Gregory I., disapproved of and discouraged secular learning. Still it was in the monasteries that the little spark was kept from absolute extinction, and in them also that it in time burst into flame.

Monasticism, older than Christianity, had its birth in the East. The exiled Athanasius and his accompanying monks brought to Rome, in 341, wondrous tales of the virtues of solitaries and of the charms of monastic life. Soon the numerous islands on the western coast of Italy swarmed with hermits; and, in 360, S. Martin, driven from Milan, established a monastery near Poitiers. Early in the next century S. Honoratus founded the celebrated abbey of Lérins. The life of quiet reverie, which was the peculiarity of Oriental monasticism, was unsuited to the lively and active Gaul; and it was not long before these retreats became schools of theology and agricultural colonies, whence men went forth to teach and to instruct.

The most widely diffused and most renowned religious Order of the Middle Ages, the Benedictine, had an Italian origin. S. Benedict, a native of Norcia, born about the year 480, established his first monastery on Monte Cassino,

on the confines of the Abruzzi, in the ancient territory of the Volsci. He laid it down in his famous rule, that "idleness is the enemy of the soul;" and therefore decreed that the brothers should be constantly occupied, either in manual labour or in study. He did not specify the books which were to form the objects of these studies; and in time it became the<sup>6</sup> "pride of the Order to collect, and their business to transcribe books; . . . and almost all we do possess of Latin classical literature, with the exception of a small number of more ancient manuscripts, is owing to the industry of these monks."<sup>7</sup> Nearly all the Bene-

<sup>6</sup> Hallam. HISTORY OF LITERATURE, vol. i. p. 74.

<sup>7</sup> I cannot here refrain from quoting a passage from Luigi Tosti, abbot of the now secularised monastery of Monte Cassino. It occurs in his *LIFE OF THE COUNTESS MATILDA* (2d Book); and though it refers to somewhat later times than those we are considering in the text, it is so corroborative of the statements therein contained, that it will, I think, hardly be considered out of place:—"It [the abbey] had come to full flower by the care of Desiderius, and now gave a stupendous testimony to the fact, that the Rule of S. Benedict, which appears written merely for psalm-singing monks, had within itself a power and virtue to form, not simply monks looking upwards to heaven, but men capable of fertilising the germs of a new civilisation. Whilst thou seest in the history of this (the eleventh) century civil and ecclesiastical society struggling with each other in the great duel between spirit and matter, between reason and force; whilst thy heart faints with fear lest humanity should again be despoiled by rude barbarism, thou canst rest and hope in the quiet Cassinese abode. There, though its abbot from time to time, his psalter laid aside, comes forth as a military baron, thou canst see the holy toil of the human mind, which begins anew to think of the religion of the True, and to feel the chaste delights of the Beautiful, and which takes part in the silent marriage of Roman and Christian civilisation. Thou needest no longer fear Attila or Genserich: Dante is drawing near, and will make thee dream beforehand of the joy of humanity awakened to new life by the harmony of his song. The eleventh century was the golden age of the Cassinese abbey, and Desiderius was its Leo X. The number of the monks which dwelt in it was great; the chain of discipline which held it in was strong; the judgment of Desiderius directing it to noble ends, truly Roman. They who five centuries before, their hand on the plough, had proclaimed to barbarians the dogma of society, now, their minds occupied with Latin learning, the treasures of which they collected and preserved, proclaimed that of human progress. These

dictine monasteries possessed libraries, and the study of ancient philosophy was not altogether neglected. Thus the traditions of ancient civilisation were kept alive, awaiting only better days and a less troubled political atmosphere to bear abundant fruit.

**Charlemagne.**—One great man strove to quicken the slow steps of history, and to accomplish by himself the work of centuries. Charlemagne appeared, and with him the first revival of learning,—an untimely, and consequently an unenduring, attempt,—a brilliant northern light, which looked like daybreak, but whose fate it was to be swallowed up in the blackness of that dark hour which precedes the morning-dawn.

When this great man ascended the throne, liberal studies had come utterly to an end. He stood forth on their behalf. He established and restored schools throughout his dominions. He gathered together learned men from different countries. To England and to Ireland is due the proud distinction of having been at that time in the van of human progress. Theodore,<sup>8</sup> a Greek Archbishop of Canterbury, sent by the Pope in 688, and his companion Adrian, had brought certain Greek books to

monks did not confine themselves to the office of patient conservators, and contemplators of the mighty reason of man. . . . Leone de Marsi, called Ostiensis, wrote the chronicle of his monastery, and as much as he knew of his own times; Amato wrote that of the Normans; Gregory of Terracina, the first pilgrimages to the Holy Land; Constantinus Africanus, in natural sciences collected and transmitted to posterity the wisdom of Hippocrates and Galen; Alfano of Salerno and Guaiferio show in their rugged lines a vein of poetry not altogether unworthy of Horace and Virgil; and Desiderius, a forerunner of the magnificent Papal worship of art, summoned to a council in his abbey, all even from distant Byzantium, who were skilled in the science of the Beautiful. Painters, sculptors, musical composers, architects, flocked to this blissful abode; and almost deafened by the noise men made about investiture and simony, and absorbed in the ideal of Christian Art, they raised a basilica, which from its mountain-top could salute with a mother's pride the far-off beginnings of Santa Maria del Fiore."

<sup>8</sup> *An Asiatic Greek from Tarsus.*

England, amongst others Homer and Josephus, and had spread abroad some knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages. Gildas, Aldhelm, Bede, Cædmon, and Alcuin had successively adorned England. Charlemagne met the latter at Parma in 780; and, two years later, the Englishman was established at the imperial court, the wealthy possessor of the revenues of three rich abbeys. He was not, however, the only illustrious guest of the Frankish emperor. Beside him were Leidradus from Noricum, Theodolphus the Goth, the one made Archbishop of Lyons, the other Bishop of Orleans; Smaragdus, Abbot of St Mihiel, the compiler of a Latin grammar; the German Angilbert, or Engelbert,<sup>9</sup> who wrote Latin verses; St Benedict of Aiane, the second reformer of western monasteries; and finally, the greatest chronicler of that age, Eginhard, "a barbarian," as he says of himself, "little versed in the tongue of the Romans."

A school which followed Charlemagne as part of his court, was established within the precincts of the palace. The emperor himself, his favourites, his sons, and even his daughters, were amongst the students. Alcuin was the principal teacher, and strove, by every means in his power, to awaken in the breasts of his half-barbarian pupils a love of knowledge. The passionate admiration learning excited is almost incredible; and but for the lofty motives which prompted these great men, and the results their enthusiasm achieved, we could smile at the pedantry which gave to Charlemagne the name of David; to Alcuin that of Flaccus; to Angilbert, Homer; and to Gisla and Gundreda those of Lucia and Eulalia.

**Works of Charlemagne.**—Charlemagne was resolved to know himself all that he ordered to be taught. The

<sup>9</sup> The favourite companion of Charlemagne in all his journeys, to whom he gave as wife his sister Bertha, of which marriage was born Nithard, the historian of the ninth century.



fierce conqueror of the Saxons and the Lombards laboured to acquire the apparently unattainable art of writing. His tablets and his style accompanied him, Eginhard tells us, to his rest; and the sleepless hours of night were beguiled by unwearied efforts to improve. He learnt to speak Latin, and could understand Greek. He even began a Frankish grammar, and that eight hundred years before the compilation of the earliest known German grammar. Like Lycurgus and Pisistratus, he caused the scattered fragments of the ancient national poetry to be collected; and he himself wrote Latin verses, some of which have come down to us. His greatest work is his sixty-five *CAPITULARIES*, a vast and confused collection of the divers acts of his power, orders, judgments, counsels, projects, plans,—in a word, administrative acts of every kind; sermons to his rude Germans, to whom he quotes S. Paul; instructions to his envoys; police regulations; agricultural plans; and anxious exhortations to the clergy, whose encroachments he seems to have foreseen. “To whom,” he asks the latter, “were the words of the apostle addressed, ‘No man fighting in the service of God encumbers himself with the business of the world?’” And again, “What is it to renounce the world? Is it only not to bear arms, and not to be publicly married?”

**Reform.**—In fact, the Renaissance of the ninth century, like those of the eleventh and the sixteenth, began with religious reform. Charlemagne corrected the manners of the clergy, and re-established regularity in their conduct and decency in the celebration of Divine worship. Transcriptions of the Scriptures and of the Lives of the Saints was the first work of ecclesiastical calligraphists; to these succeeded the writings of profane authors. Benedict III. sent a copy of Cicero *DE ORATORE*. The clergy disputed among themselves for the privilege of reading it,

and the honour of making the first copy. The ancient schools established by bishops and abbots in the sixth century had been broken up in the troublous times of invasion; Charlemagne, in 787, commanded the bishops and abbots of his empire to establish others. Two years later, he published a capitulary, by which it was ordained that a school should be opened in the neighbourhood of each monastery and bishop's seat, and that grammar, arithmetic, and music should be taught in them. Unhappily the mass of the people opposed themselves obstinately to the efforts of Charlemagne and Alcuin,<sup>1</sup> or looked upon learning as something only for the emperor and the clergy. In the records of those times we find but one Capitulary,<sup>2</sup> which positively prescribes an education for the laity, and it seems likely that this attempt had but little success. Indeed, it was inevitable that it should be so. The Church was then the only part of the nation capable of receiving literary cultivation. The scientific knowledge which Charlemagne sought to disseminate in France affected the people but little, but it was not therefore useless; it lived on in monasteries till the day came to spread it abroad. The one philosopher at the court of Charlemagne was John Scotus Erigena, an Irishman, "the only learned layman of the Middle Ages." He is the last representative of that attempt, which began in the second century and reached its greatest activity in the fifth, to amalgamate the Neo-Platonism of Alexandria and Christian theology.

#### **Expulsion of the German and Latin Languages.**

—In 814 Charlemagne died, and with him expired the glory of his race and royal patronage of learning. Little

<sup>1</sup> "Earum, ut nunc plerisque vocantur, superstitiosa otia fastidio sunt. . . . Nunc oneri sunt, qui aliquid discere affectant."—LUPUS FERRARIENSIS, Epistola I.

<sup>2</sup> THEODULPHI CAPITULARIA, §§ 19, 20.

by little, after his death, a hatred of German rulers grew up in Gaul, and little by little their language was driven from Gallic soil. The Carlovingian kings, however, clung to their ancient tongue with a pertinacity which savours somewhat of a contemptuous disregard for the prejudices of their subjects. Louis d'Outremer, though his people spoke only rustic Latin, could himself understand nothing but German ; and at the Council of Ingelheim, in 948, he appeared as German a prince as his kinsman the Emperor Otho, and could understand no better than he the Latin Papal brief.

The Capetian kings, on the contrary, took great pains to acquire the popular idiom, and Robert, the second of the race, excelled in it. "*Erat*," says the chronicler, "*linguæ gallicæ peritia facundissimus*." Thus German disappeared as a language, but remained as an influence. It amalgamated itself more or less insensibly with the new idiom of Northern France, and gave to it something of its own force and energy.

As for Latin, it only remained in France to die. A new people require a new language. The learned and refined tongue of Rome could hardly continue to exist amongst uncultivated nations. There is a curious analogy between the revolution in languages and that in governments,—both became simple, material, positive, but narrow and barbarous. Men's ideas were scant ; social relations were few and restrained ; the horizon of both thought and life was bounded. In such conditions a large society and rich tongue were alike impossible ; small societies, local governments, a meagre language, popular dialects could alone exist. When these small societies had adopted a somewhat regular form, and had determined the hierarchical relations which united them, this result of conquest and of reawakening civilisation took the name

of feudal government. By the same analogy, when the fragments of the great Roman tongue had acquired a certain regularity, and when new means had been discovered to supply the learned mechanism of ancient declensions and conjugations, this result of the barbarity of the times, and of the analytic tendencies natural to the human mind, formed the popular idioms we call Neo-Latin languages.

Everything served as an instrument in the utter destruction from which so much was to spring. The clergy of the sixth century, in their zeal against idolatry, struck the hardest blows. Gregory the Great rebuked the Bishop of Vienne for giving lessons in Latin grammar. "We are pained," he wrote, ". . . for the praises of Jupiter and those of Jesus Christ cannot be in the same mouth." Odd as this may seem, it is conceivable that, in an age so near to Pagan times, it may have been difficult to preserve the graces of classic language without the foundation of ideas on which those graces were built up,—to keep the form without the thought, the flower without the stem, Latin civilisation without profane philosophy. Gregory the Great may, perhaps, have been keener-sighted than his critics when, in his episcopal instinct, he felt confusedly the need of a new language, even were it barbarous, to express the ideas of a dawning civilisation.

This crusade in which the clergy engaged against Latin ended characteristically; it ceased as soon as the enemy was no more to be feared. Converted Latin was admitted as an object of study, and found, like all sinners, an asylum in monasteries. It became a dead language, and the clergy took it in, and cherished it with utmost care.

Thus, of the two languages spoken in Gaul under the Merovingians and Carolingians, one was banished beyond the Rhine, the other to the cloister. The people meanwhile made a language for themselves, which, being

derived from that of the Romans, obtained the name of *Romance*.

**Langue d'Oc and Langue d'Oil.**—The appended texts, taken from Nithard,<sup>3</sup> of the before mentioned oaths of Louis the German and Charles the Bald (March, A.D. 842) are valuable and interesting, as being the earliest authentic written record in the current dialect.

The opinions of inquirers differ much as to the age of the language. Raynouard, and many before him, imagined "the existence of a primitive Romance tongue, akin to the Provençal, itself derived from Latin, but spoken simultaneously, or nearly so, in Spain and Italy, as well as France, and the mother of the Neo-Latin languages. This theory has been opposed in the learned HISTOIRE DE LA FORMATION DE LA LANGUE FRANÇAISE, by M. Ampère.<sup>4</sup>

M. de la Rue calls the language of the oath "un latin

<sup>3</sup> *Oath of Louis the German*:—"Pro Deo amur et pro christian poplo, et nostro comun salvament, dist di en avant, in quant Deus savir et potir me donat, si salvara jeo cist meon fratre Karlo, et in adjudha et in cadhuna cosa, si comom par dreit son fradre salvar dist, in o quid il mi altresí fazet, et ab Ludher nul plaid nunquam prindrai, qui, meon vol, cist meon fradre Karle in damno sit." *Translation*.—"For the love of God and for the Christian people and our common salvation, from this day forth, as far as God shall give me knowledge and power, I will save my brother Charles here present, and will help him in each thing, as a man should of right save his brother, in all which he shall do the same for me; and I will make no compact with Lothaire which, of my will, can harm my brother Charles here present."

*Declaration of the Army of Charles the Bald*:—"Si Lodhuwigs sagrament que son fradre Karlo jura conservat, et Karlus meos sendra de suo part non la stanit, si jo returnar non lint pois, ne jo, ne neuls cui eo returnar int pois, in nulla adjudah contra Ludowig nun li juer." *Translation*.—"If Louis keeps the oath which he sware to his brother Charles, and Charles my Lord on his part keeps it not, if I cannot make him return to it, neither I, nor any whom I can make return to it, in any thing will give him aid against Louis." M. Roquefort gives, in his GLOSSAIRE DE LA LANGUE ROMANE, a tracing from Nithard, an historian of the ninth century. For an analysis, see the *Explication* of Bonamy in the forty-fifth volume of the MÉMOIRES DE L'ACADÉMIE DES INSCRIPTIONS (edit. in-12).

<sup>4</sup> Hallam, vol. i. p. 24 (note).

expirant;" M. Raynouard "un français naissant." It is at least the language of a time of transformation; and probably holds a mean between the two dialects which were afterwards to divide France. It seems likely that under the second race political unity maintained a sort of uniformity in the corrupted idiom, which was called the popular language. This quasi-Latin tongue had in France the same pretensions and the same power as the quasi-Roman Empire of Charlemagne. They fell together, and by the same causes. The language divided into dialects, and—to borrow the expressive simile of Cicero—like the rivers, which born side by side on Apennine heights, part asunder, some to flow down Eastern slopes towards the Ionic coast with its safe and sheltered ports and its glowing Greek climate, some to rush westward into the Tuscan sea of shoals, and reefs, and inhospitable shores,—the new language broke into two streams, of which the one went to water the smiling plains of the South, all perfumed with the dying odours of arts and Roman civilisation, and resonant with a soft echo of melodious Greek; the other, stretching northward of the Loire, met everywhere on its way Germans, and Kymri, and Northmen, and lost its limpidity by such contact.

The Normans especially exercised great influence on the dialect of Northern France. These conquerors of the tenth century did like those of the fifth: they adopted the tongue of the conquered, but in adopting it they modified it in order the better to adapt it to their own rougher organs. Sonorous syllables disappeared: the broad Southern *â* became *ay*, like our English *a*; for instance, the Latin *charitas* had given *charitat* to the Provençal, the Normans pronounced it *charitay*, and thus helped to give the Northern dialect a still more distinct physiognomy. The marks they left were all the more

ineffaceable, because they employed this language as their own vernacular. As early as the reign of William I., the successor of Rollo, no other tongue was spoken at Rouen. For the Gauls, French was a corrupt Latin, a despised *patois*; for the barbarian Normans, it was a learned language, which they studied with as much care as they did Latin.

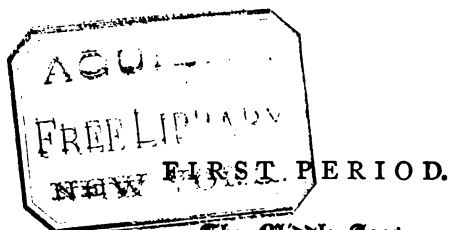
In the meantime, the idiom of the South was receiving its distinctive character from political circumstances. That country, overcome by Visigoths and Burgundians, had, under its more civilised conquerors, suffered less than the North. The independent kingdom of Arles or Provence passed in the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth, from the successors of Charlemagne to the Counts of Toulouse and Barcelona. The polished court of the latter, refined and cultivated, because of its close proximity to the Moorish kingdom of Valencia, and the commercial intercourse between Catalonia and the nations of the East, beyond that of any other European sovereign, was transferred by Raymond Bérenger on his accession to Provence, and carried with it to its new home the relish it had acquired for the elegancies and refinements, the arts and sciences of the Arabs. The language of the transported court was itself a dialect of the *Langue Romane*, similar in structure and accent to the popular idiom of Provence. The two peoples and dialects readily amalgamated, and the Provençaux grew rapidly in polish and luxury, whilst in northern France wars and invasions were hardening and disciplining the heroes of fortress and of tented field. Thus the union of Provençaux and Catalans completed the separation of the language of Southern France from that of the rude and warlike companions of William the Bastard, and the Provençal became from henceforth a tongue entirely *distinct* from the Walloon or Welsh (i.e. Gallic). The

dialects were distinguished by the word which in each expressed affirmation. The Southern was called the *Langue d'Oc*, the Northern the *Langue d'Oil*, as Dante says, speaking of his native land, "Il bel paese là dove il si suona."

That which is only diversity in the world of first principles becomes hostility in that of events. The North and South of France could not have constituted their individuality had they not hated each other. The men of the North were more valiant, but more barbarous; those of the South were more ingenious, but more effeminate. They despised each other mutually,—the one as savages, the other as buffoons. Listen to the contemptuous astonishment of the Northerners when they met for the first time (A.D. 1000) their brethren of the South. Constance, daughter of the Count of Toulouse on her marriage with King Robert, brought in her suite some of her father's courtiers. The contemporary chronicler, Glaber, remarks of them: "Their manners are as ill-made as their coats. Their own and their horses' armour is extremely curious. Their hair hardly comes half-way down their head, they shave their beards like Merry-Andrews, they wear light boots with unseemly turned-up toes, and short coats, reaching to the knee, and open before and behind. They cannot walk without jumping. Inveterate quarrelers, they are never men of good faith. Alas! The Frankish nation the honestest of peoples, and the Burgundians, greedily followed these wicked examples." *Franci ad bella, Provinciales ad victualia*, passed into a proverb, to denote the great diversity of taste and character of the inhabitants of Northern and Southern France.

These two elements, the harmonious union of which was to constitute French nationality, grew long side by side hostile and threatening till the day when they met in deadly strife in streams of Albigenian blood.





*The Middle Ages.*

*CHAPTER I.*

EPIC POETRY.

**Feudal Society.**—To the dark night of the tenth century in Europe succeeded the glorious dawn of the eleventh. It was not only literature that had suffered eclipse. France from end to end was given up to war and rapine. Her principal towns were ruined and depopulated. The Normans made constant irruptions into the north, the Saracens of Spain overran the south. The great vassals were perpetually fighting with each other, and the lower and middle classes were in a state of abject misery. Towards the end of the tenth century, a dreadful plague broke out in Southern France, and Périgord and Limousin were devastated. The nobles of these provinces were notorious as the most quarrelsome in all France. They looked upon this awful visitation of pestilence as a judgment, and entered into a covenant to abstain for the future from fighting on certain days in the week, and took a solemn oath to cease to molest, and indeed to protect, the wretched labourers in the fields. *This* was the beginning of better things. The example

of these nobles of Périgord and Limousin was followed by those of other provinces. Little by little a chivalrous spirit arose, the ruined and depopulated towns were rebuilt and repopled, and the miserable tillers of the ground ventured to sow seed in anticipation of a harvest. The awful year 1000, which universal belief had established as the term of this planet's duration, had passed by, and still France lived on. Hope revived. A grateful people raised on all sides temples to the God who had spared them. A new Christian architecture succeeded to Pagan basilicas. The most powerful vassals of the French king pushed their conquests into England and Italy, and made Greeks and Saracens fall back before the dauntless valour of their men-at-arms. A priest on the throne of St Peter dreamt of the political unity of the entire world under the spiritual sovereignty of the Bishop of Rome. A successor of his in the Papal chair woke all Europe to enthusiasm, and sent out to battle in distant Palestine those brave soldiers, whose love of war might have been dangerous to his power at home. With the cry on their lips "God wills it," the Christian hosts went out to free the sepulchre of Christ from the infidels, and in July 1099, they planted the standard of the cross on the walls of Jerusalem. This was something of that cohesion of various peoples which Hildebrand had imagined, and the tie which bound them was unquestionably the Christian faith. The Pope had told them that to die sword in hand on the burning plains of Palestine, was to merit an immediate entrance into the bliss of Paradise, and each individual in that mighty host believed that he was fighting on the side of heaven, and that

*"In van l'Inferno a lui s'oppose, ed in van  
Sarma contra lui d'Asia a di Libia il popol misto,  
Chè l'ciel gli diè fayor."*

Charlemagne's legislation with all its wisdom had been powerless to create an empire. In the middle ages the nearest approach to universal sovereignty was the Holy See,—in which a sentiment took the place of a constitution. To complete the organisation, chivalry with its high sense of honour, its valour, and its loyalty, its protection of the weak and defenceless, and its devotion to all that was pure and fair in woman, reached its perfect development. The knights brought back with them from the Holy Land much of the civilisation of the Saracens, and “the crusades were probably the great means of inspiring a uniformity of conventional courtesy into the European aristocracy.”<sup>5</sup> The elevation of women was due in great measure to the ennobling influences of Christianity, and in part likewise to the effect of Teutonic manners and customs; but the Eastern love-songs and romances, with which the Crusaders probably became familiar, were no doubt another originating cause. However it may be, this change in the estimation of women produced a great social revolution, and for the first time society, properly so called, existed in France. With the social change came poetry, inspired by gallantry and the pleasures of social intercourse. This new poetry, unlike that of Greece and Rome, was written in rhyme, a characteristic borrowed probably from the Saracens of Spain. Duke William of Guienne, who went to the first crusade, was the earliest Provençal poet, as Abelard was the first of whom we know in Northern France.

**Jongleurs and Trouvères.**—The *jongleurs* (*joculatores*), like the Greek bards, were first attached to the persons of princes. We find them in the suites of Charlemagne and Louis le Débonnaire. The chronicler tells us of the heroic songs they composed in celebration of the

<sup>5</sup> Hallam, *Hist. of Lit.* vol. i. p. 133.

victory of Charles the Bald in 868. The Norman *jongleurs* sang of the mighty feats of arms of Charlemagne and Roland before the battle of Hastings was won by their great Duke in 1066. These minstrels were magnificently rewarded by their noble patrons. Some became sufficiently rich to found hospitals, others obtained permission and means to buy and to hold noble fiefs. Bishops, abbots, and abbesses had *jongleurs* in their service, in spite of a prohibition of Charlemagne, in a capitulary of 788.

Other *jongleurs* wandered at their own risk from town to town and from castle to castle, sometimes meeting with rich rewards, sometimes at peril of life and limb. Those who could compose or recite the finest lays were received with open arms in noble dwellings. To understand the warmth of their reception, we must picture to ourselves the solitude and monotony of the ancient feudal fortresses. On the summit of a nearly inaccessible hill rose an isolated castle. Shut in by lofty walls, feeble glimmerings of daylight found entrance here and there through sparse and narrow loop-holes. Around it, straggling up the hillside, were strewn the wretched hovels of a slavish and degraded peasantry. Within, the noble châtelaine was surrounded by her daughters, and the young pages of noble blood, who knew little but how to groom their horses and furbish up their arms. The sons of the house were filling the same place of page in the castle of a friend. The lord himself could wield his arms, and drain his cup, and curb his fiery steed, but of aught else he was ignorant. How was it possible to kill time but with war and love?—to mimic the one and to tell tales of the other?—to hold tournaments or to listen to *jongleurs*? When, for six long winter months, the feudal castle had been wrapped in fog, and there had been neither war nor joust, neither visitor nor pilgrim, when the mono-

tonous days with their dreary endless evenings had passed away, the weary dwellers looked for the minstrel to come back with the swallows. What joy to catch sight of him in the distance, climbing the steep ascent, his harp around his neck if he was on foot, fastened to his saddle-bow if he rode. His clothes were striped of divers colours; his hair and beard were at least partially shaven; a purse, called *malette* or *aumonière*, hung from his belt, as if appealing before-hand to the generosity of his hosts. Without any delay, the very evening of his arrival, the baron, his squires, and dames, gathered together in the great hall to hear the poem which had been the winter's work. The minstrel told of the prowess of Oliver, who, done all but to death, raised himself once again to defy the Saracen giant; or of the tears of the noble steed, Bayard, whose blood was drunk in the famine at the Castle of Renaud; or of the arrival of the Emir's daughter in the prison of the knights; or of the lament of Charlemagne when he heard the blast of the "dread horn" of his gallant nephew Roland. The *jongleur* had no critics, no depreciators. All listened breathlessly, and were carried away by the story: in thought they made part of the marvellous adventures, and engaged in the imaginary struggles. When autumn drew near the *trouvère's* tale was at an end, and he left the castle laden with gifts,—money, horses, clothes. The knights and barons often despoiled themselves for the minstrel. As says the old romance, LES VŒUX DU PAON :<sup>6</sup>—

“ Cils jongleors eurent bonne soldée.  
 Plus de cent marcs leur valut la journée.  
 Qui fut gentil de cœur sa robe dépouilla,  
 Et pour faire s'honneur à un d'els la donna.”

<sup>6</sup> These jongleurs had good pay. The day was worth a hundred marks to them. He that was kind of heart took off his robe, and to do them honour, gave it to one of them.

Sometimes, if he was not already a knight, they dubbed him one. Often times he bore away with him the love of the châtelaine, and his departure left the castle sad and silent till his return with the next spring.<sup>7</sup>

**Chansons de Geste.**—The early heroic poems, called *Chansons de Geste*, were of such imposing length, containing sometimes as many as fifty thousand lines, that, as Fauriel<sup>8</sup> proves, they would seem to be collections of the shorter, simpler, and more primitive unwritten poems of wandering minstrels. Pieces of such length were intended to be read as well as to be recited. Many of them possess internal evidence of being originally the work of different authors. The song of *Roland* is made up of a succession of poems, varying in rhyme and detail, but containing repetitions of the same scenes. In *Berte aux grans Piés*, there are no less than nine such repetitions in succession<sup>9</sup> describing the solitude and the lament of the queen in the forest. All begin with somewhat similar words, and all contain a prayer in almost identical terms.

In a poem entitled *AIOL DE SAINT-GILLES*, Fauriel points out that one and the same scene is described twice consecutively, but with such marked and striking differences of art and effect that it is quite impossible that the two descriptions can have emanated from the same pen.

<sup>7</sup> See an article in the *REVUE DES DEUX-MONDES* (Jan. 1, 1837).

<sup>8</sup> In his work, *DE L'ORIGINE DE L'EPOPEE CHEVALERESQUE AU MOYEN AGE*.

<sup>9</sup> Here is a specimen of some of the first lines :—

1st version.	La dame fut el bois qui durement ploura.	. . .
4th	„ Par le bois va la dame qui grand paour avoit	. . .
5th	„ En la forest fut Berte, qui est gente et adroite	. . .
6th	„ La fille Blanche fleur, la royne au clair vis	
	Fut dedans la forest, moult est son cœur pensis	.
7th	„ La dame fut el bois dessous un arbre assise	. . .
8th	„ Berte fut ens el bois, assise sous un fo (fagus, hêtre)	
9th	„ Bert gist la terre, qui est dure com groe (gravier).	

We may therefore assume that when the stream of poetic imagination began to run dry, and original compositions grew more and more rare, less imaginative minds conceived the idea of linking together such productions as were most closely related to each other. These great epics form real cycles, and reproduce something analogous to that which in old times took place in Greece.

"The first great revolution noticed in the literary history of the Provençaux is the division which took place between the office of *troubadour* and *jongleur*, of composer and reciter. We have no monuments extant of the time in which these two professions were united in the same individual. The poetical genius was probably improved by the separation; yet it is noticed as one of the principal causes which operated towards the discredit and ultimate overthrow of the art."<sup>9</sup>

To the primitive *jongleur*, whose degraded life could not but have been unesteemed, succeeded by degrees poets who wrote,—learned men, clerks, *trouvères*. In their hands the *chansons de geste* gained in elegance, and indeed at first in interest; but poets who wrote in their own closet had no inspiration but their own taste, and were without the incentive of the ardent curiosity of excited listeners, which had saved the *jongleurs* from idle digressions and unnecessary rodomontade.

The epic poetry of the Middle Ages may be divided into three cycles: the French or Carlovingian, the Armorican, the Allegorical.

**French Epic.**—It was in epic poetry that French literary genius first showed itself. Italy, England, and Germany were inspired by the breath of the *trouvères*, whose three favourite subjects were Charlemagne, Arthur, and Alexander.

<sup>9</sup> QUARTERLY REVIEW, xi. 7.

In the midst of the darkness and misery of the tenth century, France had kept alive the memory of a marvellous time, when under their great king, the Franks had pushed their conquests from the Oder to the Ebro, from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. Mussulmans, Pagans, Saxons, Lombards, Bavarians, and Batavians, all had either bowed to the yoke or trembled at the power of the Frankish king. The creator of a new Roman empire, the restorer of arts and sciences, his vast plans and his immense genius had doubtless only been dimly understood by his contemporaries; but they had left in the popular imagination that confused but deep and imperishable memory, which is the meed of all sublime things, and the chord admiring subjects had struck, vibrated on through long centuries. The weakness and incapacity of his successors, and the shame and dishonour of the Norman invasion, increased the respect of the people for the great men that were no more. In the misery of the present, the memories of a glorious past were at once a consolation and a revenge.

The scenes of the poems of this cycle are not all laid in the days of Charlemagne. Some go back to Clovis and Dagobert,<sup>1</sup> others are as recent as Charles the Bald and even the Capetian kings.<sup>2</sup> It seems as if the glory of the great Charles had exercised the same fascination on his critics as on his people; for the great cycle of French heroes of all ages has been marked with his name, and he has been made monarch, as it were, of this vast empire of poesy.

The most remarkable epics seem to have been written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; but there is little

<sup>1</sup> As for instance:—*PARTHÉNOPEX DE BLOIS*; *FLORIENT AND OCTAVIEN*; *CIPERIS DE VIGNEVAUX*.

<sup>2</sup> *HUGUES CAPET*; *LE CHEVALIER AU CYGNE*; *BAUDOIN DE SEBOURG*; *LE BASTARD DE BULLION*.



doubt that before they were collected in the form which has come down to us, they had been sung and recited with endless variation. The *jongleur*, at the head of the army of William the Conqueror, sang of Charlemagne, Roland,<sup>3</sup> and Oliver, as the Normans moved out to battle.<sup>4</sup> Robert Guiscard took with him to Italy *jongleurs* from his beloved Normandy, who sang to him *à clère voix et à doux sons* the prowess of the warriors of France. The lyric poets of the twelfth century,—Coucy, Blondel, Quesnes de Béthune,—constantly mention the heroes of epic poetry. Thus an unbroken tradition bound the belief and the interest of their listeners to the events of which the *jongleurs* and *trouvères* sang. The singers did but echo the ideas and impressions of the nation at large.

The first characteristic of the Carolingian epics, or, as they were called, *Chansons de Geste*,<sup>5</sup> was their religious inspiration. Their favourite topic was the strife between Christians and Mussulmans. Faithful reflections of the society which produced them, they gave utterance to its innermost thought, its constant preoccupation,—the Holy War. But few of the earlier *chansons de geste* describe an actual crusade, which was too near at hand to have risen in the popular imagination to a fit subject for an

<sup>3</sup> Possibly Rollo.

<sup>4</sup> *Taillefer qui moult bien chantoit,  
Sur un cheval qui tôt alloit,  
Devant le duc alloit chantant  
De Charlemagne et de Rolland  
Et d'Olivier et des vassaux  
Qui moururent à Roncevaux.* (ROMAN DE ROU.)

<sup>5</sup> From the Latin *gesta*, which in the middle ages was used to signify *public act, authentic history*; thus Eginhard says,

*Hanc prudens gestam nōris tu scribere, lector,  
Einhardum magni magnificam Caroli.*

And persons whose family had acquired historical celebrity, were called *gens de gesta*.

epic;<sup>6</sup> but the same religious craving broke forth in the crusades and in the national poetry,—they were but two effects of the same cause, two manifestations of the same sentiment. The great service which Charlemagne did to a dawning civilisation by checking northern invasion, was transformed in the *chansons de geste*. His thirty-three campaigns against the Saxons have left no remembrance but in the title of a single work, *GUITECLIN* (Witikind), by Jean Bodel. He is always represented as repulsing the Saracens of Spain, of Septimania, of Italy, or of the East. All the nations against whom he made war were represented as Mussulmans; and every victory over the unbelievers, whether of Charles Martel or of Pépin, was ascribed to him.

**Roland. Turpin.**—The earliest and most important of these poems is the famous *CHANSON DE ROLAND*, or *DE RONCEVAUX*.<sup>7</sup> In its original form it is as old as the time of Louis the Good-natured. The oldest version that has come down to us was written in the eleventh century by the Norman *trouvère* Turol. Its plan is simpler than that of any other *Chanson de Geste*. The pathetic story of the glorious defeat of the Paladin, who fell a victim to treachery and his own rash valour, is told in five cantos, the masculine vigour of which often rises to heroic sublimity. All Spain is vanquished. Saragossa alone holds out. At length the Saracen king, Marsille, who garrisons it, proposes to deliver up the city and to receive

<sup>6</sup> Some celebrate the first crusade. Grégoire de Tours, surnamed *Bechada*, described its principal events in a long Provençal poem, which no longer exists. The pilgrim Richard wrote an epic on the siege of Antioch in the northern dialect, before the year 1102. This was rewritten, under Philip-Augustus, by Graindor de Douai. The whole of the second, and the only remaining fragment of the first, were published in 1848 by M. Paulin Paris.

<sup>7</sup> First published by M. Francisque Michel in 1837, and again by F. Génin in 1850.

baptism. Ganelon, a knight, is sent to treat with him. But Ganelon is a traitor. He promises Marsille to lure into an ambuscade Roland and the flower of Christian chivalry, who are to form the rear-guard of the retiring army. The plot is executed. Charlemagne recrosses the mountains, and then Roland and his knights are unexpectedly attacked in the valley of Roncevaux. The gallant warrior could easily recall the main body of the army to his aid. His ivory horn, *Olifant* (elephant), whose sound would reach the emperor, hangs at his belt : his brother in arms, Oliver, advises him to blow it. Confident in his own and his companions' prowess, he scorns to do so. The fight begins. Roland, Turpin, Oliver, every man of them, perform prodigies of valour. The invincible phalanx, which yields not an inch, strews the ground with corpses. But the gaps in the unbelieving host are filled up as soon as made, and the handful of Christian knights grows smaller at every onset. At last Roland, sore bestead, sounds his horn. The emperor hears it, and hurries from beyond the mountains to the succour of his brave nephew. Too late, alas ! All the Christians have perished. Oliver has just sunk, wearied out by his own great deeds, and Roland and the archbishop, having once again put to flight the army of the infidel, fall, faint from loss of blood, their unflinching faces still turned to the treacherous foe.

At the end of this chapter will be found a quotation from this noble poem, which will give some idea of its force and beauty. It describes the effort of Roland, when death is inevitable, to break his good sword, *Durandal*, to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy. He strikes the rock ten times ; but the trusty blade will not be broken, and the rock splits into fragments. The Pyrenean peasant still shows the traveller the gigantic breach, to which tradition has given the

name of the *Brèche de Roland*,—so ineffaceable are the great memories of those days !

We have said that the sentiments expressed are often of the highest heroism. Turpin, mortally wounded, makes a last charge to the Christians, reminding them, with the unshaken courage of Leonidas, that the beds on which they shall sleep that night are ready made for them in the Paradise where rest all brave warriors. Roland himself bears his dying knights, one by one, to the expiring archbishop, that he may bless them and help them on in their passage to life eternal. This is that inspiration from Christianity of which we have spoken, and to which is owing so much of the beauty of mediæval poetry.

This expedition of Charlemagne against the Saracens of Spain, and the rout of Roncesvalles, form the subject of a Latin chronicle, *DE VITA ET GESTIS CAROLI MAGNI*, evidently the work of a monk, erroneously ascribed to Turpin. This chronicle has been supposed by some to be the source of the Carlovingian epics ; but reliable inquirers<sup>8</sup> have incontestably proved that, far from being a source, it is but a poor compilation of the popular songs of which Charlemagne is the hero.

The most striking characteristic of the *Chansons de Geste*, after their Christian, is their feudal, spirit. Sung in the castles of the proud barons, whose ancestors had hurled defiance at the degenerate scions of the Carlovingian race and parcelled out between themselves the empire of the Franks, we can imagine how powerful was the echo these songs awoke when they recounted the deadly combats and the unshrinking valour which had ended in the independence of the disloyal vassals.

<sup>8</sup> P. Paris, *BERTE AUS GRANDS PIÉS*, preface, p. xxxv. ; Raynouard, *JOURNAL DES SAVANTS*, July 1832 ; Fauriel, *REVUE DES DEUX MONDES*, viii. 390.

With the single exception of the *CHANSON DE ROLAND*, in which feudal spirit had not yet supplanted admiration for the king, the poets are openly favourable to the great barons. Even Charlemagne, formidable by his power, is odious by his behaviour. Passionate, capricious, overcredulous, avaricious, timid, irresolute, he is in sore need of the wise counsels and the good blows of his knights. Perpetually engaged in struggles with his revolted vassals, he often fails before their heroic efforts, and only overcomes by treachery. One marvels as one reads the name of Charlemagne beneath such a portrait, and feels that his glorious renown bears the punishment due to the weakness and incapacity of his successors. It is not Charlemagne that the *trouvères* despise, they do but depict him like the monarchs with whom they are familiar. All the kings in the *CHANSONS DE GESTE*, Pepin and Charles Martel, Louis the Good-natured and Charles the Bald, are counterparts one of another.<sup>9</sup>

The principal interest of these poems in modern times is the faithful picture they present of life in the Middle Ages. "It is," says M. Quinet, "in these long recitals that we see, in their true position, the monastery; fair-faced ladies gathering May-flowers, or looking out from a high balcony for news; the hermit reading in the heart of the forest his illuminated book; the damsel on her dappled palfrey; messengers and pilgrims seated at table, and conversing in the great hall; burghers at the postern, serfs or

<sup>9</sup> The following is a list of the principal *chansons*, describing the feudal relations between Charlemagne and his great vassals:—*L'QUATRE FILS AIMON*, OR, *RENAUD DE MONTAUBAN*, by Huon de Villeneuve; *LE ROMAN DE VIANE*, OR, *GUERIN DE MONTGLAIVE*, by Brans; *MAUGIS D'AIGREMONT*, by Huon de Villeneuve; *BEUVE HANSTONE*, author unknown; *HUON DE BORDEAUX*, by Huon Villeneuve; *DOOLIN DE MAYENCE*, by the same; two poems called *OGIER LE DANOIS*, one by Raymbert, the other by Adams Le R and *RAOUL DE CAMBRAI*, by an unknown author.

the glebe; flags fluttering in the wind, embroidered standards unfurled; hawking; ordeals by fire, water, and single combat; courts baron; jousts; heroic swords, Durandal, Joyeuse, Hauteclaire; prancing steeds, called in imitation of Homer by their names, the Bayard of the four sons of Aymon, Charlemagne's Blanchard, Roland's Valentin; all that went along with and followed the disputes of the barons,—challenges, parleyings, insults, armings, summonings of the ban and arrière-ban, machines of war, engines, assaults, showers of iron-headed arrows, famines, murders, dismantled towers,—in a word, the complete spectacle of the life in which all extremes met, noisy and silent, varied and monotonous, religious and warlike,—so that these poems, which at first seem to exceed the bounds of sober truth, give in reality a more exact, vivid, and detailed account of facts and feelings than history itself. Every subject that the Middle Ages could furnish, was thus treated of by the *trouvères*; but in this multitude of principal themes, there was one to which they unceasingly returned, which they could neither exhaust nor abandon when once they had touched it,—that of jousts and battles. . . . The warlike genius of France is that which these valorous poets breathe. In this their iron tongue admirably seconded them,—poor in moral terms, it was singularly rich and easy when it had to do with arms, with torn and bruised hauberks, with crimson blood, with wounded vassals, and scattered brains. Thus in the middle of their interminable epopees, in which, like their ancestor Homer, they often fall asleep, the signal of battle is always for them the awakening of genius. A sincere enthusiasm possesses them; they find sudden illuminations in the thick of the fight. . . . Powers of imagination makes them equal to their heroes; for they are themselves knights-errants of art and poetry.

In spite of the difficulties of an involved idiom, their proud fancies flash out grandly, like Durandal from its sheath. Without the succour of art, they fight, as we may truly say, naked and unarmed; and, by the simple power of thought, they rise to a sublime simplicity, never found again since their day. . . . One breathes in these rugged lines the genius of the unbroken strength and lofty pride which took possession of man in the solitude of donjon-keeps from which he saw at his feet debased human nature at its forced toil;—the poetry, not of the eagles of Olympus, but of the kites and hawks of Gaul.”<sup>1</sup>

One of these poems relates a combat between two of Charlemagne’s paladins. The conflict lasts a whole day; the horses of the combatants have been hacked in pieces; the sword of one has been broken. They begin again on the morrow, their armour bruised and battered, their shields useless for defence, and fight till evening falls. With the darkness of night, a cloud comes down from heaven and settles between the knights. From the cloud steps forth an angel, who gently salutes the combatants, and “in the name of God, who made the heavens and the dew, commands them to make peace, and sends them against the miscreants at Roncesvaux. The trembling knights obey; they undo their helmets, after having embraced each other on the field, talking together the while as old friends. This is the feudal lord in his relations with God. Is it not all singularly grand, and lofty, and forcible? The trembling of those two invincible men before the unarmed seraph, is it not an invention in the true taste of antiquity,—not Roman, but Greek; not Byzantine, but Homeric? There are many such in the *trouvères*.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> SUR LES ÉPOPÉES FRANÇAISES DU DOUZIÈME SIÈCLE.

<sup>2</sup> Quinet, *Idem*.

**Roman des Loherains.**—Of all the CHANSONS DE GESTE, there is none that expresses more completely and accurately the spirit and manner of feudal times than the ROMAN DES LOHERAINS, or none in which the independence of the barons is as fierce and as proud. It is one of the oldest of French epopees, and was almost forgotten before the end of the Middle Ages, even whilst the exploits of Charlemagne and his twelve peers were still being sung. Yet it had once been very famous. The learned editors who have put it within reach of our own day, consulted no less than twenty different manuscripts, all belonging to the twelfth century, and all too unlike each other to be copies the one of the other. Indeed, these different versions show traces of many distinct dialects of the *Langue d'Oïl*,—Picard, Norman, Champagne, Lorraine,—and thus prove its wide-spread dissemination. The oblivion into which it fell may be attributable to its subject; a struggle between two feudal races, one from Lorraine, that is, Germanic; the other from Artois and Picardy, that is, French. Garin, the hero of the first, has the whole Teutonic nation for his allies, the German origin of their names is hardly disguised in their Romance form. The friends of his adversary, Fromont, are Hugh Count of Gournay, Guillaume de Montclin, and Isoré de Boulogne. King Pepin is a child whose tender age is in happy accordance with the character of impotence the poem ascribes to royalty. As he grows up, gratitude for services rendered and a common origin draw him to the people of Lorraine, but his interests unceasingly separate him from them. We can recognise in him the efforts of the German conqueror to become king of France. The poets everywhere and unhesitatingly take the side of the Princes of Lorraine; indeed, so great is their partiality, that they will not even allow the brave



and unfortunate Fromont to die in peace in his own castle. They chase him from France, and make him die a Saracen in exile in Spain. It is not surprising that a poem in which feudalism appeared under its most ancient form, that is as the ascendancy of German princes, should have made way little by little for those which celebrated more national memories. The Lorraine epic shared the fate of the dynasty which it favoured. It sang the supremacy of the Teutonic race,—a supremacy at its best, ill-assured and ephemeral, tottering from its earliest rise till it was for ever overthrown by a national reaction. Such, in like manner, was the fate of the poem: at one time known from one end of Gaul to the other,—then swept away and forgotten as a thing which had never been. This Gothic Iliad, like its immortal prototype, begins with the rivalry of two warriors for the favour of a beautiful woman. It too has its Achilles,—Bégués, the brother of Garin of Lorraine, whose life is a series of combats, and whose greatest happiness it is to fight: "More than all things," he exclaims, "such sport ravishes me!"

**Chivalry.**—In the midst of passages and scenes which recall the great poems of antiquity, we find occasional gleams of a spirit of chivalry; yet the Carlovingian epopee, though feudal, was hardly chivalric. Its barons, indeed, were brave, but their valour had not yet acquired, by an admixture of softer sentiments, that marvellous loftiness which was to raise it almost to a religion, and give birth to that essentially new-world word and virtue,—honour. Men have much disputed as to the nation with whom chivalry first originated. Germans, Lombards, Arabs have each been put forward, and doubtless the courage and generosity, the respect for beauty and defencelessness. which distinguished these nations had

their share in awakening moral instinct in others; but chivalry, the ideal of feudalism, was the natural outcome of the moral progress which distinguished the Middle Ages. Intelligence began to direct strength, and thus perfected civilisation. The clergy, oppressed by the violence and lawlessness of the great feudal chiefs, ingeniously made use of existing customs to tame and subdue their oppressors. They converted the old military customs of heathen Germany, of which Tacitus tells us, into a religious ceremony of sacramental character. The night before the ceremony, the young soldier held his vigil, a silent and lonely watch beside his arms, in some church, or chapel, or consecrated spot. Like catechumens whom the Church was preparing for baptism, he wore a white tunic. Fast and confession formed part of the discipline of the aspirant for the honour of knighthood; a symbolic bath preceded the reception of the armour which the Church had blessed. The candidate had even sponsors, who answered for the fulfilment of his vows: those vows

“To reverence the king as if he were  
Their conscience, and their conscience as their king,  
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,  
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,  
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity.”

In order to assimilate knighthood completely, the clergy invented for it degrees of honour and rank to correspond with those of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. A knight ranked with a bishop, and shared his duties and privileges.

Soon this institution, created by the clergy, became independent of them, and in time even hateful and hostile to them. Sentiments of which the founders had little dreamed,—earthly love, a taste for adventure, mili-

tary ambition,—took the place of religious feelings, and became the soul of chivalry.

Then the Church, once again roused into action by the instinct of self-defence, instituted military orders as a bulwark against the enemies of the Faith, and the world of the Middle Ages saw, as it were, two distinct chivalries side by side, the one mystic, pious, austere, whose object was to make a knight a Christian monk in arms for the defence of the faith; the other, worldly, gallant, greedy of glory, with love and honour its end and aim.

These two opposing principles, once incorporated in the daily life of the people, could not but be reflected in its poetry. So the poets of chivalry sought a new historical period and fresh heroes, and Arthur succeeded Charlemagne in the affections of Europe.

**The Round Table.**—As early as the sixth century, British bards had sung the praises of their noble but unfortunate king in Keltic Armorica. Age by age the tradition grew in popularity, and the legend in circumstantial delineation. "What the house of *Cædipus*," says a writer in the *QUARTERLY REVIEW*, "and the tale of Troy Divine were to the Greeks, the Round Table and the Paladins of France were for many centuries to European literature. The French romances preferred the British story, and the Italian the French one, whence it happened that owing to the different character of the two languages, the greater part of the Round Table romances are in prose, while the Twelve Peers have more frequently been celebrated in verse."

Early in the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Bishop of St Asaph, gave to the world a collection of ancient British traditions,<sup>3</sup> which, it has been maintained,

<sup>3</sup> *ORIGO ET GESTA REGUM BRITANNIÆ.*

was but a translation of a much older work in the tongue of Armorica, brought from that country by Walter Caleinius, Archdeacon of Oxford, and by him presented to Geoffrey. In 1155, the Jerseyman Wace, a churchman of Caen, wrote a "free version;"<sup>4</sup> of this history in French verse, called ROMAN DE BRUT, which was succeeded by a second poem equally long, describing the battle of Hastings, and the reigns of the Dukes of Normandy to the sixth year of Henry II. The French *trouvères* of the end of the twelfth century, whose special subject was Arthur, adopted the versification of Wace,—rhyming couplets of eight syllables in a line after the manner of the *fabliaux*. This is the metre of all the principal romances of the Round Table: MERLIN, LANCELOT DU LAC, EREC ET ENID, TRISTAN, &c. The language in which they were written was French, which was by this time known and spoken "far beyond the boundaries of France. Not only was it the common spoken tongue of what is called the court, or generally of the superior ranks in England, but in Italy and Germany, at least throughout the thirteenth century."<sup>5</sup>

These romances are as unlike the Carlovingian poems in style as in subject. In the latter the *jongleur* was but as the almost impersonal voice of tradition; in the former the authors may fairly be considered poets in the true sense of the word. The *jongleur* prided himself on being historically true; his successor, who wrote to be read, aimed at eloquence and imaginative display, to ensure which he often fell into the vice of prolixity, from which the *jongleur* would have been saved by the flagging attention and waning interest of his auditory. Mary of France, a native of Flanders, gathered together and put into poetic form, under the name of LAYS, the heroic

<sup>4</sup> Hallam.

<sup>5</sup> Hallam, HIST. LIT. vol. i. p. 37.

and touching legends of Brittany. Fourteen of these remain to us, all belonging to the early part of the thirteenth century.

In the fourteenth century the romances of chivalry began to be written in prose; and, in the South, the far-famed and time-honoured tongue of the Provençal poets passed for ever into a patois of the people.

Before leaving the second epic cycle, the Arthurian, we must remark that, besides the romances which sang of love and adventure and knightly prowess, the other phase of chivalry to which allusion has been made,—the mystic and religious,—found its poetic expression. Its one subject was the "Quest of the Holy Grail," that legend of high endeavour and blameless life, whose beauty never grows old. The best and oldest of these religious romances is that of *Perceval*, begun by Chrétien de Troyes, continued by Gauchier de Dordan, and finally completed in the latter years of the twelfth century by Manessiere.

**The Classical Epic.**—The first epic cycle, the Carolingian, represented the Germanic element in French civilisation; the second represented the Keltic; there was yet a third element which could not be overlooked, and this,—the Græco-Latin,—furnished matter for the last cycle of middle-age epopee.

The first instance of this inspiration of antiquity is a curious one. It is the history of Ulysses, under the disguise of contemporary names and circumstances, in which a seigneur in the neighbourhood of Toulouse, called Raymond du Bosquet, does duty for the old Greek hero. This Languedocian legend belongs to the eleventh century. It was not till the end of the twelfth that French poetry began to repeat the ever-glorious names of Ilium and of Thebes, of Hector and of Alexander, and seemed a harbinger of a far-off renaissance. Homer was not,

whoever, the source from which the *trouvères* drew their information on their favourite subject, the siege of Troy. Two manuscripts, the one attributed to Dares Phrygius, the other to Dictys of Crète, formed the text-books of all the poets of this time, and were by them accepted as indisputably authentic. So we have Achilles and Hector as mediæval knights, the Trojan walls are of marble, the palace of Priam is an enchanted castle. This curious travesty of the heroes of antiquity has left deep marks on European literature. Our own Shakspeare invests classical events and people with Middle-Age sentiments, and Corneille and Racine generally put the heroes of antiquity on their stage in the shape and character that the interminable romances of the seventeenth century had borrowed from the thirteenth.

The first *trouvère* who chose the Trojan war for the subject of his verse, was Benedict de Sainte-More, in a poem which consists of thirty thousand lines.

Hugues de Rotelande, another *trouvère*, who lived in Cornwall in the last half of the twelfth century, in his romance of PROTESILAUS, of 10,800 lines, with a lofty disregard of chronology, as well as of language and manners, makes one of his heroes, Hippomedon, pay a visit to King Arthur on his return from hearing Amphion, Baron of Sicily, sing!

With these poets Medea, a great favourite of theirs, is a sort of Armida. Hugues de Rotelande, makes her a virtuous queen of Crete, who marries Protesilaus, after having overcome his brother Danaus. Raoul Lefebvre narrates her adventures as the writers of antiquity described them, not, however, without the most amusing anachronisms and an inimitable *naïveté*. According to him Medea restores to the full bloom of youth the King of the Myrmidons, who profits by her magic, not like old

Æson, to join in the solemn celebration of the victorious Argonauts, but "to sing, and dance, and do all joyous things; and, what is more, to ogle very willingly *les belles demoiselles*."

But no hero of antiquity owes as much to the metamorphosis of chivalry as Alexander the Great. No less than eleven *trouvères* have treated this subject; the first and most celebrated of whom are Lambert li Cors (the Short) of Châteaudun, and Alexander, who, though a native of Bernay, received the surname of de Paris from his long sojourn in that capital. These two poets wrote conjointly, in 1184, a poem on *Alexander* in the long twelve-syllable metre, which has ever since been known to literature as the Alexandrine. The latter part of this poem is by Thomas of Kent, who lived in the early part of the fourteenth century, and is a curious commingling of the traditions of Alexander and Arthur.

The author from whom these *trouvères* gathered their information about Alexander was Simeon Sethus, Master of the Wardrobe to Michael Ducas, who, in the eleventh century, published a history of Alexander, purporting to be from the pen of Callisthenes, but which seems to be little more than a Greek translation of the Persian legends of the great conqueror. In imitation of the pseudo-Callisthenes, the mediæval poets take the Macedonian king on an aerial expedition, and then, as earth has nothing more left for their hero to admire and conquer, down into the depths of ocean. Thus in these poems Oriental fables and chivalric sentiments, Christian knights and Eastern heroes exist side by side: Alexander is dubbed a knight, carries the *oriflamme*, has a *gonfalonier*, and twelve peers; tournament succeeds tournament, and enchantment, enchantment.

This romantic portrait of the King of Macedonia, and

this exaggerated enthusiasm and heroism, survived the *trouvères*, and "cast," says Ampère, "some reflection on the hero of the second tragedy of Racine."

**Allegory and Didactic Poetry.**—The predilection for classical subjects was a sign of reawakening learning and a proof of progress. It was, however, fatal to epic inspiration. Little by little knowledge succeeded to emotion, and metaphysics to poetry. To this change the clergy contributed largely. We have already seen the ecclesiastic Wace exchanging epopee for history in the twelfth century, in his *BRUT D'ANGLETERRE* and his *ROMAN DU ROU*. About the same time Philippe de Than, the nephew of another priest of Caen, wrote a metrical treatise on natural history, entitled *BESTIARIUS*, and another on practical chronology called *LIBER DE CREATURIS*. A third Norman, Guillaume, wrote a *BESTIAIRE DIVIN* under Philip Augustus. To these succeeded the moral poets. The Englishman, Simon du Fresne, wrote a translation in French verse of the *CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY*, under the title of *INCONSTANCE DE LA FORTUNE*; Pierre d'Abernon translated, also in verse, the *SECRETA SECRETORUM*, ascribed to Aristotle. Lastly, as in the days of the decay of Greek poetry, followed numerous poems on hunting, fishing, &c. The piety of the time showed itself in metrical lives of the saints and pious legends, and above all in hymns to the Virgin Mother of God, whose *cultus* sprang up in the age of chivalry and gave poetry its passionate exaltation.

**Roman de la Rose.**—The last and most remarkable in its evidence of decay of the poems of the epic period, is the *ROMAN DE LA ROSE*, a clever but wearisome allegory of 22,000 lines. It was begun in the age of St Louis, towards the middle of the thirteenth century, by Guillaume de Lorris, and finished by Jehan de Meung the



Lame (*le Clopinel*), who died in 1320, and was thus a contemporary of Dante. The whole spirit of this joint composition is prosaic. Guillaume is prodigal of description, that resource in decay when poets who lack imaginative power give themselves up to analysis. Jehan is absolutely without poetic sentiment. He sets himself to wither with contempt the beliefs so precious to chivalry. The body of a noble, he protests in forcible language, "is not worth an apple more" than that of a carter, or a clerk, or a squire. A reverence for women, which had been almost as a religion to the knights of the Middle Ages, becomes in his poem the life-long imprisonment of a caged bird ever struggling to escape back to liberty and license. His satire culminates when he writes of the clergy, one of whom, *Faux-Semblant*, is an ancestor of Tartuffe. This poem was thought incomparably learned at the time of its production. Gerson, who wrote a special treatise to condemn the author, commends its erudition;—"there is none that can be compared to it in the French tongue," is his testimony; and such was the influence of the poem, that France did not for several generations shake herself free from the taste for allegory it introduced.

**Fabliaux.**—While the long chivalric epopee was in vogue, a short and familiar metrical story, called *fabliau*, shared with it public favour. This *fabliau* was to the *chanson de geste* what light comedy is to tragedy. Many of the subjects came from the Arabs and Persians, indeed from far-off India and China. These stories, more often than not wanton and scoffing, suited French taste and genius, and showed the particular gifts of the *trouvères* to greatest advantage. They were no less popular in the castles of the nobles than in the hovels of the peasantry, where, as throughout French history, popular poetry was

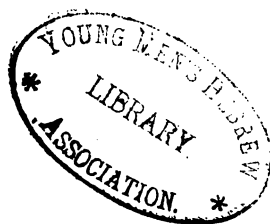
the natural counterpoise of despotism. The people heard in the *fabliaux* not merely stories of their own humble life, but racy anecdotes of the vices and misdemeanours of their lords. To us, in our day, these *fabliaux* are an invaluable possession, illustrating as they do the ordinary daily life of the Middle Ages.

One of the boldest and most skilful of the writers of *fabliaux* was Rutebœuf, a contemporary of St Louis, who has given a minute, though probably exaggerated, picture of his poverty, than which, he avers, none has been more complete "since the fall of Troy." Profound as was his distress, his satirical wit never languished. Rather than refrain from launching a shaft at the clergy, he risked the king's displeasure. Yet neither he nor his fellows—Guérin, Baudouin, Jean de Condé, Jean de Boves, &c.—were enemies of the Church. Only their biting wit and lively spirits were irrepressible,—hit something they must, and the clergy were the most conspicuous target. The *fabliaux* were not all satiric. Some were merely amusing stories, some were pathetic, some were even devout. Satire had not then, as in the days of Horace and Juvenal, a form proper to itself. Everything served in turn as a means for its dissemination: *Sirventois*, *fabliaux*, *chansons de geste*, sermons, religious ceremonies,—even architecture, for the free-masons of that day were not only poets, they were satirists also. The ROMAN DU RENARD was an endless burlesque, in which all human society, but especially the nobles and clergy, were satirised under the names of different animals. For two centuries all Europe read this satire, and it was imitated in countless romances: LE COURONNEMENT DE RENARD, RENARD LE NOUVEL, and numberless others, the general tendency of which was the negation of the spirit of chivalry, that vital principle of the Middle Ages. Cunning everywhere is made to triumph

over right and might, and the feats of Renard meet with universal approbation.

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*Q'o sent Rollans la veue ad perdue;  
Met sei sur piez quanqu' il poet s'escertuet;  
En sun visage sa couleur ad perdue,  
De devans lui ot une perre brune  
X Clops i fiert par doel e pur rancune;  
Cruist li acers, ne frient ne n'esguignet;  
E dist li quens: "Sancte Marie, aïue!  
E, Durandel bone, si mare fustes!  
Quando jo n'ai prod de vos n'en ai mescore!  
Tantes batailles en camp en ai vencues,  
Et tantes teres larges escumbatues  
Que Charles tient, ki la barbe ad canue!  
Ne vos ait hume ki pur altre fuite!  
Mult ben vassal vos ad iung tens tenue;  
Jamais n'ert tel en France la solue."*



## CHAPTER II.

### LYRIC POETRY.

**The Troubadours.**—The epic poetry of the *Langue d'Oïl* has furnished us, as we have seen, with a complete and historical picture of mediæval life. The lyric poetry of both *troubadours* and *trouvères* paints for us portraits of individual knights and barons, and forms the indispensable complement of the larger pieces. The lyric muse first woke to life and song in Southern France, where the sky was softer and manners were milder, where all women were loved and every knight was a poet. The intercourse between the Provençaux and the Catalans, increased by the accession of Raymond Béranget of Barcelona to the county of Provence, brought the former people under the influence of Arab civilisation and elegance. This civilisation, which had gathered luxury in the voluptuous climate of Andalusia, and softness in the perfume-laden air of the gardens of the Alhambra, gradually and insensibly invaded Christendom. When, before the accession of Raymond, French and Gascon and Provençal knights had gone into Spain at the bidding of Alfonso IV. of Castile, to do battle for the faith, they had felt the attraction of Moorish culture: the magnificence of her architecture, the splendour of her royal courts, the wealth of her emirs, the exuberant imagination

of her tale-tellers and her poets. From that day forth Christian poetry bears ever-increasing marks of Saracenic influence, and to it some have not hesitated to ascribe that peculiar characteristic of mediæval verse—rhyme.

Almost all the poetry of the *troubadours* is lyric.<sup>1</sup> Their stirring life of pleasure and excitement hardly left them time for long epics. Very little learning was necessary to write harmonious verses in the musical southern tongue. Love was their great theme. Kings, sovereign counts and barons, knights of all countries, even serfs, sang the charms of their ladye-love and their own undying constancy in rhythmical numbers. Arnaud de Marveil, "the less famous Arnaud," a poor serf, lifted his eyes to his master's wife, Adelaide of Toulouse, and found a vent for his feelings in poetry. Pierre Vidal, the self-styled Greek emperor, the Don Quixote of real life, who for his ladye's sake went on all fours, clad in a wolf-skin, sang of the *joie* of love. Geoffroi Rudel, sighing for the far-off fair one of Tripoli he never saw till death was nigh, consoled himself in verse. Peyrols, *l'aventurier*; Arnaud Daniel, "Master of Troubadours," preferred by Dante to his rival Gérard de Berneil; the lion-like Sordello of Mantua, immortalised by Dante, and in our own day by Browning; Folquet, the fanatic Bishop of Toulouse, the counsellor of the ruthless Simon de Montfort;—these, and countless others, rang the changes in *tensons* and *aubades* on the theme of which they never tired—love—which was with them a chivalrous devotion, akin to the *mania* of the *Phædrus*.

They rarely sang of war, but occasionally a fiercer and more virile voice was lifted up. The turbulent and false-

<sup>1</sup> The following are the names of some Provençal epics: GÉRARD DE ROUSSILLON, GEOFFROY ET BRUNISSENDE, CHRONIQUE DES ALBIGEOIS, ROMAN DE FLAMENCA, ROMAN DE FIERABRAS.

hearted Bertrand de Born, the inciter of the revolt of the sons of Henry II. of England, whom Dante met in *Inferno*, carrying his bleeding head in his own hands, and the before-mentioned Sordello, "the feverish poet," the rival of Ezzelin, were the most distinguished writers of warlike poems, called in the language of the day *sirventes*, because in them "*SERVIENTIUM, seu militum facta et SERVITIA referuntur.*"

But whether they sang of love or of war, they were undoubtedly the teachers and the forerunners of the greater Italian poets who succeeded and eclipsed them. The thirty years which elapsed between the death of Folquet and the birth of Dante, were filled by the feeble utterances of inferior singers, most of them Sicilian or Tuscan, who employed Italian instead of Provençal as their language.

The most piquant form of the Provençal love songs was the *tenson*, a dialogue or poetical tournament between two troubadours in the presence of knights and ladies. "The *tensons*," says Jean Nostradamus, the simple biographer of the *troubadours*, and the father of the famous astrologer, "were disputes of love between poet-knights and ladies conversing together on some fine and subtle question of love; and when they could not agree, they referred them for definition to the illustrious lady-presidents, who held an open and plenary court of love at Signe and at Pierrefitte, or at Romanin or elsewhere, and gave sentence on them, which they called *lous arrests d'amours.*"

Raynourd finds indisputable traces of these curious tribunals from the first half of the twelfth century till after the end of the fourteenth. Maître André, a chaplain at the French court, who lived about 1170, mentions them in a Latin treatise as an already ancient institution, which

he maintains originated with one of Arthur's knights. Ladies, as we have seen, presided and gave sentence:—"de dominarum judicio," writes the grave André. In a list of these fair counsellors given by Nostradamus, we find the name of Laura de Noves, wife of Hugues de Sade, the inspirer of the immortal verse of Petrarch.

Unfortunately, it was with such enervating trifles that the graceful Provençal muse for the most part occupied herself. Steeped in the soft languor of Southern skies, and lulled by the sweet harmony of love songs, she paid no heed to the rumours which reached her of an awakening world. If she joined enkindled Europe, and crossed the seas to fight against the infidel for the possession of the Holy Sepulchre, her dreams were still of her fond loves, her one desire was to return to the bright eyes of the ladies at home, and die in the sunshine of their smiles.

No wonder that poetry so devoid of any deep inspiration—for even love was not serious—should have rapidly declined, till the fury of religious persecution sweeping over the fairest country of France, silenced for ever her gay lyre, and banished her tongue from the spoken languages of the world.<sup>2</sup>

**The Trouvères.**—In the meanwhile the poets of Northern France had caught the infection of lyric song, and the two great theological disputants of the twelfth century, Abelard and St Bernard, did not disdain the gentle art. For the verses of the latter we have but the testimony of an enemy, Bérenger, the defender of Abelard. For those of Abelard himself we have the distinct declarations of the writer and the subject. "As most of your

<sup>2</sup> "One only relique of the *science gaie* appears to have survived the lapse of ages in the singular institution of the Floral Games at Toulouse, which was in its origin no other than an academy or college of troubadours."—QUART. REV., xi. 8.

verses," says Héloïse, "sang our loves, my name was soon known by yours. Every public street, every private house, re-echoed with my name, and women envied my good fortune." "If," says Abelard, "I wrote verses, my heart being inflamed by love, they spoke not of philosophy, but breathed only love. Several of my little pieces are still sung and recited in many countries, especially by those who care for the life I was then leading." Clearly, then, these verses were in the popular tongue. They are unfortunately lost to us; but in the same language, "we have an immense number of poets belonging to the twelfth and the two following centuries. One hundred and twenty-seven are known by name in the twelfth alone, and above two hundred in the thirteenth,"<sup>3</sup> of whose works many are extant.

These love-songs in the *Langue d'Oïl* did not confine themselves to the expression of feelings,—they ventured to relate and describe. A whole class of poems, called romances by M. Paulin Paris, had for subject amorous and chivalrous adventures, somewhat in the style of the graver historical epopee.

First amongst the writers of this style of romance we must place Audefroy le Bastard, born at Arras in the end of the twelfth century.

The great crusader, Quesnes de Béthune, who first planted the standard of the cross on the walls of Constantinople, and was an ancestor of the illustrious Sully, sang the crusade in which he had fought in noble and majestic lines, inspired by the twofold enthusiasm of religion and chivalry.

But the more seductive and brilliant poetry of Provence found a host of imitators in Northern France. Of these Thibaut IV. of Navarre and Champagne<sup>4</sup> was the first

<sup>3</sup> Hallam, *LIT. OF EUROPE*, i. 33.    <sup>4</sup> Born in 1201—died in 1253.



and most renowned. Reared in childhood in the south, he grew to manhood in the north, and united in his own verse the grace of the Provençal *troubadours* and the vigour of the sterner *trouvères*. Enamoured of Blanche of Castile, Queen of France, for years he sang of love, never allowing the name of his exalted mistress to transpire, but in company with Philippe de Nanteuil, Guillaume de Viviers, Baudouin de Reims, and others, chose themes of gaiety and gallantry. All at once a change comes, and Thibaut declaims against the corruption of the world. The devil's rod, he says, is baited with four hooks,—lust, covetousness, pride, and felony. As for him, Thibaut, he will from henceforth have no lady but the blessed Mary. From that time forward his voice shall celebrate no charms but hers. He paraphrases each of the five letters of her sacred name, and finds in them marvels of merit and glory. Then he preaches in verse a crusade, and sets out himself for Palestine, from which he returns to die. Amongst the latest of his verses, whether from a mistake of the classifier, or from the frailty of human nature, are once more lays of earthly love!

Such is the advance on antecedent poetry in the works of Thibaut, that a rapid attainment to the excellence of the seventeenth century might be almost looked for. But the troublous days which followed on the accession of the House of Valois disappointed any such expectation.

To these troubles may be added the entire abandonment to the clergy by the laity of the Middle Ages of the right to think seriously. Knights and princes solved all questions by force of arms. Speech and poetry were to them but a lively pastime, the fitting adjunct of feast and tourney. The whole moral life—dogma, philosophy, passion—was left to the priesthood. The layman had but to

believe—no need for him to think. The Church thought, disputed, decided for him. So when the poet lost, as he did in the days of France's downfall, warlike enthusiasm, there was nothing left for him but light allegory, or play of words, or shallow sentiments. Charles of Orleans, the son of the brilliant Valentina of Milan, the prisoner of Agincourt, the last *trouvère*, is a notable instance of this inherent cause of decay of the mediæval schools of poetry. Endowed with singular gifts, he was the last and most perfect exponent of the lyric genius of the Middle Ages, but his verses are without any depth of either thought or passion, and are more conspicuous for art than matter—*materiam superabat opus*.

One word must be said before taking leave of lyric poetry of Froissard, but one word only, for the literary reputation of the chronicler would suffer by a close analysis of his lyric poems. He hampers himself with childish difficulties of his own creation, as for instance that of beginning one line with the last word of the preceding line, and is as dull and uninteresting as such puerilities would lead one to imagine. His *DIT DU FLORIN*, however, a dialogue between the author and the last piece of money in his purse, is full of piquancy and charm.

### CHAPTER III.

#### CLERICAL SOCIETY IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

SIDE by side with the frivolous social life of knights and barons, which re-echoed but to songs of love and war, was a grave and austere society composed of the greatest intellects and the most active and influential minds of the Middle Ages. The former seemed to think that the faculty of speech was given to man for nought else but to cheer his hours of leisure ; the latter made of it an instrument of mighty power, used it to formulate dogma, to preach, to confess, to guide souls—in a word, to form public opinion and to rule nations. The new idioms of Europe were still too weak for their strong thoughts. Rooted in the past, they spoke its tongue, and kept the imperishable idiom of Rome, either as a guarantee of immortality or a vague instinct of domination. They piously preserved the sacred tradition of ancient letters, little dreaming that they were nursing in their bosom the child that should one day turn against them.

In the Middle Ages it was the power of the clergy alone which brought unity into the feudal chaos—a unity of faith, of manners, and, in part, of language. From a profane point of view, the Catholic religion was to Europe what the Olympian games had been to Greece ; the councils of the Church were her Amphictyonic assemblies, the

Papacy was the Macedonian Hegemony which a second time sent Europe out against Asia. But the Catholic federation, in principle at least, had a purely spiritual basis. Whilst the lay world knew of no privilege but force, the Church admitted the power of election; priests chose their bishop; monks, their abbot; the college of cardinals, their Pope. The Christian Church was the association of all others the most popular, and the most accessible to every noble ambition. But she stood aloof from laymen, and made religious affairs and dissensions the privileged inheritance of the clergy, so that even literature suffered. While the one class grew more pedantic, the other sank into grosser ignorance; the one lost in practical sense and knowledge of life, the other in education and intelligence. Gregory VII., by the promulgation of the law of the celibacy of the clergy, did what was wanting to make this separation complete and entire.

**Norman Abbeys.**—Carlovingian times had left to the Middle Ages a great number of episcopal schools, of which the most famous were those of Tours (revived by Alcuin), of Reims, Le Mans, Angers, and Liège. The eleventh century saw many such established or restored. The best and most celebrated were in the north of France, and more especially in Normandy. The children of those sea-kings, who had carried terror and ravage into all northern Gaul, became the most zealous propagators of civilisation. Forgetting their own bloody faith, and even the tongue of their fathers, they brought to the service of Christianity the ardour and energy of a new-born people. William the Conqueror, who was thought worthy the name of the Great Builder, multiplied schools by multiplying churches and monasteries.

Not only did the towns of Normandy, Rouen, Caen,

Lisieux, boast such seats of learning, but remote forests and secluded valleys offered congenial retreats for study and prayer. One of these, l'Abbaye du Bec, of which the traveller may still see traces, sent out the Italian Lanfranc, and the Piedmontese Anselm, his disciple, to our own archiepiscopal see of Canterbury.

**Schools at Paris.**—In Paris, as elsewhere, instruction was fostered by the Church. The first school was held either in the bishop's house or under the cloisters of Notre Dame. The noise of the classes was too much for the canons, who drove the pupils to the court between the episcopal palace and the Hôtel-Dieu. They excepted from this banishment the students destined for the service of the Church, and those of noble blood, amongst whom were the two sons of King Lewis the Fat.

William of Champeaux opened a school of logic in 1109, in the priory of Saint Victor, without the licence of the chancellor of Notre Dame. For this he was threatened with excommunication, but the canons of Sainte G  nevi  ve, to whose neighbourhood he had migrated, sheltered him, and claimed a right to issue licences within their own territory. The Latin Quarter soon swarmed with students: Joscelin, Alb  ric de Reims, Robert de Melun, set up their schools. They were eclipsed by Peter Abelard, of whom we shall have occasion to speak anon.

The Benedictines of S. Maur tell us that, in the twelfth century, the number of students in Paris exceeded that of the citizens! Philip Augustus enlarged the city to make room for this vast influx, and the enlargement only drew more who had been unable to find room before. Not till the thirteenth century was the University of Paris definitely constituted. Daunou says the name University was first applied to it in 1209.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> HIST. LIT. DE FRANCE, xvi. 46.

John of Salisbury, Roger Bacon, Brunetto Latini, master of the immortal Dante, were among the illustrious students of the schools of Paris. Gathered out of all countries of Europe, this mixed nation had manners and a physiognomy of its own. It occupied one third of the city. Its yearly procession, in the month of June, to the benediction of the fair of the *Landit*, reached from the Church of S. Julien-le-Pauvre to the doors of S. Denis, and ten thousand persons recorded their votes on questions put to universal suffrage. The scholars, needy and turbulent, often begged their daily bread, and broke the stillness of night by assaulting peaceful citizens and carrying off their wives. If a provost interfered to punish the noisiest and most obnoxious, the University stopped its courses, and the provost was forced to make ample apology, for a decree of Philip Augustus had exempted the students from civil jurisdiction. So fascinating in that day appeared the dry science of logic, that men grew gray in its pursuit. John of Salisbury tells us that on his return to Paris, after twelve years' absence, he found some of his former fellow-labourers still studying dialectics, and offering to support their theses against all comers for the pure honour of logic.

**Religious Orders.** — The religious orders, though rivals and enemies of secular seats of learning, were yet their auxiliaries. Rome, warned by the vague rumours of coming peril to Catholic orthodoxy, with the profound sagacity for which she is so remarkable, changed the aim and labour of monachism. Many monasteries had already been reformed, and others founded, when, in the thirteenth century, she sent out two new orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans. Vowed to perpetual poverty, possessing nothing but their scrip and their habit, these new doctors demanded an entrance into the University of Paris. This

was long refused; but at length, overcome by their importunity, and wearied out by the anathemas of the Holy See, she admitted them to her degrees and honours. The older monasteries had long been labouring assiduously, though quietly, in the cause of learning. Their greatest pride was to collect, their favourite occupation to transcribe books. Indeed, it was considered a disgrace to a monastery to be without a library, so that "*Clastrum sine armario, quasi castrum sine armamentario*" passed into a proverb. Gibbon makes a sarcastic comparison between the works sent out from one Benedictine monastery and those from our two English universities.

**Medical Education.**—The scant remains of Græco-Latin learning were formed into two distinct courses of study, the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*, which reduced the liberal arts to seven. The *trivium* consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics; the *quadrivium*, the higher studies of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. This division, which answers roughly to the modern one of "*Lettres*" and "*Sciences*," was introduced by Cassiodorus and Martianus Capella into the schools of the West. Under Christian teachers, dialectics soon forsook the service of grammar for that of theology, and this change produced the characteristic science of the Middle Ages, scholasticism.

**The Schoolmen.**—"The scholastic theology," says Hallam,<sup>2</sup> ". . . was, in its general principle, an alliance between faith and reason—an endeavour to arrange the orthodox system of the Church, such as authority had made it, according to the rules and methods of the Aristotelian dialectics, and sometimes upon premises supplied by metaphysical reasoning." It was the first symptom of the awakening of human reasoning—the first attempt of

<sup>2</sup> LITT. EM. i. 12 sti.

free discussion against authority. The earliest method of treating theology was that of the Fathers—ingenious illustrations and interpretations of Scripture. The next—that of Bede and the theologians, from the seventh to the eleventh centuries—was by means of extracts from the Scriptures themselves, and from the writers of the first six centuries of the Christian era, to whom was given the distinctive title of Fathers. The change to scholastic theology may be fairly ascribed to the eleventh century. The mendicant friars, who were without the culture and literary knowledge of the older monks, betook themselves altogether to disputation, and thus, in the thirteenth century, gave a great impulse to this philosophy. Thomas Aquinas the Dominican, and Duns Scotus the Franciscan, became founders of rival sects, who disputed on for two or three centuries, and were in the end the means of checking the revival of learning in Europe.

Roscelin of Compiègne is generally regarded as the founder, in the eleventh century, of the schoolmen. His philosophy, which is distinguished by the name of *nominalist*, led him to the denial of the mystery of the Trinity, and procured his excommunication. His great adversary was Anselm, who wrote against him a TREATISE ON THE TRINITY. William of Champeaux attacked nominalism in the name of science, as Anselm had in that of faith. He had at first great success, and pupils flocked to the school he founded, but he was vanquished by the most accomplished scholar and subtlest dialectician of the age, the young Breton, Peter Abelard.<sup>3</sup>

**Abelard and Bernard.**—This name is well known to us. His intellectual triumphs, his unfortunate love, the hatred of his enemies, are “familiar in our ears as household words.” We know of the concourse of his

<sup>3</sup> Born in 1079—died in 1142.



pupils on the hill of S. G  nevi  ve, of their obstinate pursuit of him in his solitude of Champagne; of the fair and gifted H  lo  ise, who for love of him refused to marry him, and at his bidding buried her love in a cloister, and who now at last rests by his side in a Parisian cemetery.

The solution which Abelard gave of the great question of *universals* was an apparent conciliation of the two rival schools of medi  val philosophy, the *realists* and the *nominalists*—the barbarous form of *idealism* and *empirism*—the Platonies and the Aristotelians of the twelfth century. He admitted with the nominalists that general ideas are not entities, and agreed with the realists that these ideas are more than mere words, affirming, like Condillac and the eighteenth century philosophers, that they were conceptions of the mind, born of observation and formed by analysis. Passing on to the dogmas of religion, he sought to prove them by dialectic method and subtle reasonings. This was to recognise an authority higher than that of faith, and the churchmen took alarm. Abelard, like his master Roscelin, broke with Catholicism, and Bernard of Clairvaux was opposed to the heretic. This holy man<sup>4</sup> was at that time the champion of orthodoxy and the oracle of France. A Church which had in its service high-born cardinals and prince-bishops, obeyed the voice of a simple abbot, whose only superiority was genius and zeal. He was the soul of councils, the bulwark of dogma, the reformer of the clergy, the preacher of crusades. He traversed France from end to end, and raised towns and villages by his eloquence. He visited Germany, and, though ignorant of the language, preached with such power of expression, and in such commanding tones, that his listeners, who could not understand his

<sup>4</sup> Born at Fontaine in Burgundy in 1091—died in 1153. His works consist of more than 400 letters, 86 sermons, and numerous treatises.

words, fell at his feet and beat their breasts in penitential sorrow. Abelard owed his influence to the marvellous subtlety of his mind; Bernard to his deep convictions, his devotion to the Church, and his enthusiastic love of virtue. The one was great by the power of his reason, the other by his noble spirit of self-sacrifice. Like the ideas they represented, these men were necessarily in antagonism to each other. Bernard launched invective after invective against Abelard. "Which is most insufferable in his words," he cries, "his blasphemy or his arrogance? Which most reprehensible, his temerity or his impiety? Would it not be better to close such a mouth with a gag than to refute by argument? Does not he whose hand is against every man provoke the raising of every man's hand against him? 'Every one,' says he, 'thinks thus; and I think differently.' Who, then, are you? What better thing do you possess? What great discovery have you made? What secret revelation can you show us, which has escaped the saints and deceived the eyes of the wise? Tell us what this thing is which has appeared to thee, and never before to any other? . . . He who lies speaks of himself. Take, therefore, for thine own, for thine own alone, that which comes only from thyself. As for me, I hearken to prophets and apostles, I obey the gospel, and if an angel from heaven should preach any other, let him be accursed!" Faith is manifestly the inspirer of these words, and is alone responsible for the unmitigated harshness of some of his thoughts. Yet this same orator, when the faith is not in jeopardy, comes down from his lofty eloquence to the tenderest and most graceful sentiment. No one has used more persuasive words in honour of Mary, the symbol of purity and love; no one has spoken in gentler tones of the touching mystery of God, for love of man a wailing babe in the

cave of Bethlehem ! We can, as we read them, persuade ourselves of the truth of the portrait a contemporary has sketched for us: "A certain angelic purity and dove-like simplicity beamed from his eyes, a faint blush coloured his cheeks, and fair hair hung around a throat of dazzling whiteness."

**The Schoolmen.**—Besides solemn discussions on high questions of philosophy, thought found other food in the physical sciences, whose study had been introduced into Europe by the Saracens. Gerbert, who visited Spain towards the close of the tenth century, was the first to direct the attention of Europeans to the new learning; and he is said to have brought back with him the numerals and arithmetic we now use. The Arabians understood astronomy and medicine, and the writings of Avicenna and Averroes brought the study, both of natural philosophy and of chemistry, or alchemy, as it was called, into vogue.

Albert of Bollstädt,<sup>5</sup> known to literature as Albertus Magnus, a man of marvellously extensive erudition for his time, published an encyclopædia of all contemporary general knowledge. The comprehensiveness of this work and his immense learning won for him a great, though somewhat sinister, renown. His disciples imagined him to be a magician. He is said to have shared the belief himself, and is charged with having, by his influence, been the principal means of the favour to which in his time astrology, necromancy, and kindred subjects attained. It was well for him that he did not share the fate of his contemporary, our own Roger Bacon, a more original thinker than himself, though like him a believer in the occult sciences and a reputed sorcerer.

<sup>5</sup> Born in Suabia in 1205—died in 1280. His works were collected in twenty-one folio volumes in 1651, by the Dominican Peter Jammi.

Saint Thomas, called Aquinas from being born near Aquino in the south of Italy,<sup>6</sup> the Angelic Doctor, author of the most celebrated mediæval work on ethical philosophy,<sup>7</sup> belonged to one of those orders of Mendicant Friars—the Dominican—whose institution had given such an impulse to scholasticism. Neglecting the study of natural sciences, he gave himself up altogether to morals and metaphysics. He encouraged ardently the translation of Greek and Arab philosophers, and, besides his *SECUNDA SECUNDÆ*, conceived the plan of a vast encyclopædic account of moral and political sciences. This great work, the *SUMMA TOTIUS THEOLOGIÆ*, though unfinished, is one of the greatest monuments of the mind of the middle ages.

The disputations between Idealists and Empirists called scepticism into being. Simon of Tournai proved one day the mysteries of religion, and employed himself the next in overturning what he had just established. William of Conches openly declared himself a disciple of Democritus and Epicurus. Thus, of the four great systems of ancient philosophy, three, we have seen, had their representatives in the Middle Ages. There remained but mysticism, the latest born in Greece. This, too, was represented by men of devout mind and lofty intellect, and notably by John of Fidanza, known as S. Bonaventura, the friend of Aquinas.<sup>8</sup> Though an Italian, he was admitted to a chair in the University of Paris the same day as his friend and fellow-countryman, which double reception sealed the fate of the illustrious university in its quarrel with the Mendicant Friars. Bonaventura soon forsook the beaten track of the schoolmen. He recognised a power superior to reason,—the illuminating influence of the Deity,—and

<sup>6</sup> Born in 1227 ; died in 1274.

<sup>7</sup> The *SECUNDA SECUNDÆ*.

<sup>8</sup> Born in Tuscany, 1221 ; died at Lyons, 1274.

opposed an enthusiastic piety to the icy subtleties of scholasticism.

But the Middle-Age mysticism was not always orthodox. "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me,"—and the listener, waiting on this inward voice, was not always docile to outward authority. Joachim of Fiore, the master of mystics, was condemned by the fourth Lateran Council; his disciple, John of Parma, the preacher of a new gospel, in his *INTRODUCTION TO THE ETERNAL GOSPEL*, also fell under anathema. But their defeat could not overthrow mysticism. Devout souls and speculative intellects brooded in the congenial stillness and solitude of the cloister on tremendous spiritual problems, and comforted themselves with visions of the Great Unseen.

**Imitation of Christ.**—The most remarkable fruit of these musings is the well-known *IMITATIO CHRISTI*, which, except the Bible, has gone through more editions and been translated into a greater number of languages than any book. Its authorship is unknown. It has been ascribed to S. Thomas-à-Kempis, or von Kempen, of the Deventer Society; to Gerson, the illustrious Chancellor of the University of Paris; and to a Benedictine called Gersen, said to have been abbot of a monastery at Vercelli. Some have even claimed S. Bernard as its author; but a majority, including the Sorbonne, have decided in favour of à-Kempis. *Da mihi nesciri* was the prayer of the pious writer, and the prayer has been granted.

## CHAPTER IV.

### HISTORY IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

**History in the Cloister.**—An account of the services of monasteries to literature would be incomplete without a short mention of the chronicles and archives which these bodies collected and preserved.

Whilst the gay world of chivalry sang love-songs and immortalised its heroes in romantic lays, the graver world of the cloister compiled its chronicles in sober prose. Every monastery wrote its own annals,—in early times in Latin, and later on in French. In character they bore a striking resemblance to the *ANNALES PONTIFICUM* of Old Rome, and would seem to have had their origin in the necessity which existed of exactly fixing the date of Easter. Dionysius in the sixth, and the Venerable Bede in the eighth century, had transcribed the Paschal Tables. The principal churches and monasteries of the West followed their example. In these tables, each cycle of nineteen years occupied one or two pages, on which spacious margins were left, which naturally came to be used to set down the principal events of each year. Such was the origin of those numerous chronicles, of which amongst the most ancient are those of the Monastery of S. Armand in Belgium, written in the seventh century.

The space allotted in the dry pages of these laconic records to the infrequent occurrences which came to dis-

turb the monotonous routine of conventual life, is as great as that devoted to the frequent events on which hung the fate of nations and empires. "Martin died" is an entry in the chronicles of the Abbey of Corvey on the death of an unknown and obscure monk; "Charles, mayor of the palace, died," is the announcement farther on in the same annals of the close of the career of the great *Hammerer* of the Saracens, the valorous founder of a line of kings.

In the age of Charlemagne these monkish chronicles received some development; that of Eginhard at least is more detailed than any of its predecessors. Indeed, we are told that a royal decree rendered the keeping of these records obligatory, and that, on the death of the king, they were examined, and the writer of the most excellent was chosen to digest and collect them all into one, which was solemnly deposited amongst the archives of the house. These annals passed from monastery to monastery, and were often copied, as is evident from the fact that there are still extant many different abbeys where the same facts are related in precisely similar terms. After the twelfth century, when the poetic spirit was dying out, the *trouvère* often made reference to these histories, which he affirmed he had read, and the chronicler sometimes borrowed the style of the *jongleur*.

The far-famed Abbey of S. Denis, not content with simply transcribing records of its own, made careful and laborious collections of all the best chronicles of other foundations, adding to them as time went on and more were produced,—thus forming a vast encyclopædia of its country's history. It was a noble thought thus in its archives to rescue from oblivion those kings whose bodies lay mouldering in its vaults. Suger<sup>1</sup> was probably the

<sup>1</sup> Chancellor of S. Denis, a man of humble birth, who rose to be chief counsellor of two kings, Louis VI. and VII.

originator of the plan. He himself wrote the history of Louis the Fat, and probably that of his son, Louis the Young, in the reigns of both of whom he had played so prominent a part. These biographies continue the chronicles of Aimoin; Eginhard; the fictitious Turpin, the anonymous astronomer of Louis the Good-natured; and Hincmar of Rheims. They were followed by the histories of Rigord, and of William the Breton, the *GESTA* of Louis VIII., and the lives of S. Louis and Philip the Bold, by William of Nangis, who also wrote a chronicle continued down as far as 1340. The next in succession to these was probably the chronicle—still, like its predecessors, written in Latin—of the anonymous Monk of S. Denis, which brings us down to the death of Charles VI., and completes the Latin series. Henceforward these contributions to history were written in French, into which language some of the earlier chronicles had already been translated for the use of the laity.

The first such translation was one of the romantic history attributed to an Archbishop Turpin who never existed. To this succeeded the *CHRONIQUES DE FRANCE*, translated originally by the minstrel of Alphonse of Poitiers, brother of S. Louis; a second time in the early part of the reign of Philip the Fair; and finally, by the monks of S. Denis themselves, in an authentic and authorised edition, given to the world under the title of *CHRONIQUES DE FRANCE, SELON QUE ELLES SONT CONSERVÉES À SAINT DENIS*.

**History in the World.**—Under the tyranny of Louis XI., when to speak the truth was impossible, the important annals of S. Denis came to an end, happily not before history had ceased to be the work of the cloister alone, nor till secular society had produced such chroniclers as Villehardouin, Joinville, and Froissart.



The first of these<sup>2</sup> had, in the twelfth century, written an account of the fourth crusade—*HISTOIRE DE LA CONQUÊTE DE CONSTANTINOPLE*—which, from the heroic deeds it describes, and the romantic scenes it portrays, forms a worthy link between the chivalrous *CHANSONS DE GESTE* and the faithful records of the historian. The events of the time, no less than the author's natural tendencies, make it almost a poem. The imagination of the *trouvère* had dreamed of nothing more marvellous than the conquest of an empire by a handful of pilgrims hardly sufficient to besiege one gate of the imperial seat ("*ne put tout l'oest assiéger que l'une des portes*")—of no contrast more striking than that of those brave and warlike knights in their heavy iron armour, simple, hardy, and uncultivated, in the midst of a corrupt and effete civilization, amongst the unbridled luxury and effeminacy of perfidious Byzantium. No wonder that the hearts of these rude warriors quailed within them at the sight of the great city, with its lofty walls, its gorgeous palaces, and its gilded domes, sparkling in the sunlight of Greece! Yet notwithstanding, their wonted valour did not forsake them, so that "*oncques plus orgueilleusement nul port ne fut pris.*"

Villehardouin's style is grave and concise. He states facts without comment or reflection. His sentences are short and to the point. He employs the expressions of oral narration, and has but few at his command. His faithful and simple narrative possesses an indescribable charm, and, though not quite what we call history in modern times, is a great advance upon the dry monkish chronicles.

Joinville.—A century after Villehardouin, who was killed by the Bulgarians in an ambuscade in 1213, ap-

<sup>2</sup> Geoffroy de Villehardouin, Marshal of Champagne ("*Joffroi de Villehardouin, li mareschaus de Champagne*")

peared Jehan de Joinville,<sup>3</sup> Seneschal of Champagne, the inventor of that particular form of historical writing for which the French have since been so famous—MEMOIRS. The lapse of a hundred years since the simple narration of Geoffroi is evident in each of its pages. The Middle Ages have in the meantime lost much of their stiffness and severity, and have gained expression and physiognomy. It is no longer the brave and honest warrior, who goes straight to his fact without digression or personal pre-occupation, but a *naïf* talker, who gossips pleasantly of all his reminiscences and of himself. The mixture of the great historical occurrences with the personal adventures and impressions of the writer give his MEMOIRS a peculiar interest and character, and the minute details which are never wanting bring far-off events close to us with a curious reality. The ease of Joinville is in striking contrast to the constraint of his predecessor, who evidently experienced emotions similar to his, but despaired of being able to describe them. In vain should we seek in his Chronicle the familiar and picturesque details which make a picture of the description of Joinville. Freer as the later writer is in his style, he is no less so in his thought. He reflects, comments, compares, moralises. He does not even shrink from a digression which appears to him opportune. He relates anecdotes and travellers' tales, which he has picked up in his wanderings. Brought up at the court of the elegant and witty Thibaut of Champagne, and a chosen companion of the just and high-minded S. Louis of France, he combined in himself the seriousness of a practical man and the light vivacity of the *troubadours*. Villehardouin's history was a *Chanson de Geste*, Joinville's is a *fabliau*. In face of the direst danger, his light-heartedness does not forsake him ; he jokes with his cousin, the Count of Sois-

<sup>3</sup> Born in 1223 ; died in 1317.

sons, about a hazardous encounter they have had with the Saracens—"ils se trouvent d'humeur à railler ensemble,"—and looks forward to relating it "*devant les dames.*"

S. Louis is the soul of the whole composition, as of the historic epoch. The work reproduces all that was then going on in the French nation, when S. Louis was the centre of all, to which all was subordinate. Villehardouin described feudal independence, Joinville demonstrates the growing importance of royalty.

**Froissart.**—Jehan Froissart, canon and treasurer of the collegiate church of Chimay,<sup>4</sup> the Walter Scott of the middle ages, born just a century after Joinville, was the last and most brilliant chronicler of feudal times. His work is a vast historical picture, full of life and movement, brilliant in colour, gorgeous in costumes. Battles, sieges, assaults, skirmishes, feats of arms and of horsemanship, royal progresses, august assemblies, tournaments, banquets, splendid attire, great ceremonies,—all that made up the life of the fourteenth century,—is described in his picturesque and brilliant narrative.

His work is a singular example of the pre-occupation of an exclusive society, which, satisfied with itself and dazzled by its own superficial elegance, does not feel the foundations of its native land yawning to engulf it. Fed with chivalric romances, the only subject read in court or castle, it transported its dreams into real life, and thus the fiction which had been born of the feudal system reacted upon and modified it.

Froissart, the inmate of a castle, was a witness of the scenes of which he was *pars parva*, and was not, like Villehardouin and Joinville, a valiant knight, who, after a long life of fighting, sets himself to recount the acts in which he has shared, but a writer by profession, who calls

<sup>4</sup> Born at Valenciennes about 1337; died in 1410.

himself an historian. Attached to the court of Philippa of Hainault, Queen of England, he visited England and Scotland; he met Chaucer and Boccaccio at Milan; retired temporarily to the cure of Lestines; was a guest of the Duke of Brabant, and of the Counts of Blois and of Foix; travelled backwards and forwards over France and Flanders;—his life, like his history, an endless moving panorama.

After a banquet or a conversation that had lasted far on into the night, the wandering historian, before retiring to rest, would note down all that he could remember of the day's events; and his inaccuracy and confusion in chronology are a necessary consequence of his method. His history, which reaches to the year 1400, is not confined to France. It gives valuable information on the affairs of England, Scotland, Ireland, Flanders, Spain, Germany, Italy, Rome, and Avignon, even of Prussia, Hungary, Turkey, Africa, and countries beyond the sea. Hallam calls him, "for his picturesque descriptions and fertility of historical *invention*," the "*Livy of France*."<sup>5</sup>

**Philippe de Commines.**—Again another century, and another change. Philippe de Commines, by marriage with a French heiress Sieur d'Argenton in Poitou,<sup>6</sup> marks an epoch in historical literature. The brilliant and animated spectacle of feats of arms and feudal life and strife is exchanged for the grave and instructive study of rising political science. The poetical inspiration of the Middle Ages has disappeared from Europe, and has been succeeded by cunning, stratagem, perfidy, and crime. Italy has her Borgias, her Medicis, her Machiavel, and England

<sup>5</sup> LITERATURE OF EUROPE, i. 241.

<sup>6</sup> Born in 1445 at Commines in Flanders; died in 1509. His memoirs embrace a period of thirty-four years—the reigns of Louis XI. and Charles VIII.—from 1464 to 1498.

her Richard Crookback. The Emperor Frederic III., like Tarquin of old, answers the ambassadors in a fable;<sup>7</sup> and the craftiest man of his time fills the throne of France.

The history of Commynes is dramatic as a whole, not in detail. It represents to us the interesting and important struggle between the new-born spirit of diplomacy and the dying spirit of feudal ages. The author compares and reflects, reasons about the actions of men, and moralises on their consequences, with a sagacity never previously displayed. Full of admiration for successful intrigue, he is triumphant when he holds in his grasp the threads of three or four political combinations. His birth had placed him about the person of the Duke of Burgundy, but Charles was incapable of delicate intrigue, so Commynes forsook him for his enemy Louis, transferring his allegiance not out of treachery to the Burgundian, but from sympathy with the wily king. "He regards Charles the Rash," says Sir James Stephen, in his *LECTURES ON THE HISTORY OF FRANCE*,<sup>8</sup> "with that affectionate interest which the heroism even of the unwise will excite in the bosoms of the wisest. He contemplates Louis XI. with that combination of curiosity, attachment, and awe which minds of more than ordinary power so often cherish for each other. . . . He is the unqualified admirer, if not the unscrupulous apologist, of his royal master, and seems insensible alike to the injustice of the ends at which he aimed, and to the baseness of the means by which he pursued them." "In this respect," remarks Dr Arnold,<sup>9</sup> "Philippe de Commynes is in no degree superior to Froissart, with whom the crimes committed by his knights and great lords never interfere with his general eulogies of them: the habit of deference and respect was too strong

<sup>7</sup> Commynes, iii. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Vol. ii. p. 221.

<sup>9</sup> *LECTURES ON MODERN HISTORY*, p. 119.

to be broken, and the facts which he himself relates to their discredit appear to have produced on his mind no impression." Indeed, Louis and Commynes were necessary to each other: apart, they would have been infinitely less valuable to posterity. Such a king required such an historian: the one was a complement to the other, as language completes thought. Commynes' life, so different from the secluded lives of monkish chroniclers of history, gave him ample opportunity for that study of his fellow-men for which his natural acuteness fitted him so pre-eminently. Louis took him into his confidence; made him share his sleeping-room; explained to him his plots; admitted him, dressed precisely as himself, to his political interviews. So he was at the very fountain-head of information, and showed himself worthy of his lot of an historian by writing only—truth. Henceforward the aim of history was to instruct—not to amuse. It became critical, accepted and weighed contradictory evidence, and made use of passing events to teach a lesson for the future.

Commynes' diction is simple, almost colloquial, but the keenness of his observation, the subtlety of his analysis of character, and his quick appreciation of important political situations, raise his work almost to the level of the highest style of history. The picture he draws of the results of the administration of Louis XI. has a calm and simple grandeur no modern historian had then attained to, and hardly any has since surpassed. In the words of the preface to the old English translation of 1723: "He teaches with as much verity as plainness and simplicity of style, such fair lessons as will show princes the way of governing their people with gentleness and order. . . . In short, his book is a pleasant and profitable field, full of infinite good fruits, useful for all conditions, in good fortune as well as bad,—for him that commands as well

as him that obeys; and all enforced with such Christian-like persuasions, and fortified with such important and excellent precepts, that it is impossible to read them without being affected."

Between Froissart and Commines came Monstrelet, a gentleman of Picardy, the continuator of the former, Christina of Pisa, and Alain Chartier. Christina, the daughter of Thomas of Pisa, the astrologer of Charles V., was born at Venice in 1368. She followed her father to the French court, where she married Etienne du Castel. She was the most accomplished woman of her time, is said to have known Greek, and wrote much, both poetry and prose, in the French language. Her contribution to history is a *LIFE OF CHARLES V.* Both she and Alain Chartier,<sup>1</sup> who wrote the *HISTORY OF CHARLES VII.*, hold a middle place between the last chronicler of the middle ages and the first historian of modern times. Both are poets and moralists. Both place reflection side by side with fact, and quotation with thought. Both quote Seneca, Cicero, Virgil, Orpheus, Musæus, and Homer. Both aim at something more than a bare chronicle, and aspire to be orators, and even philosophers. Alain Chartier, especially, inspired by the sight of his country's misfortunes, is often eloquent. His patroness, Margaret of Scotland, wife of the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XI., finding him once asleep, astonished her lords and ladies by kissing his lips, a homage, she took care to explain, paid, not to the man himself, but to "the mouth whence had issued so many golden words."<sup>2</sup> It was indeed but a presage of the welcome France was about to extend to the already dawning Renaissance.

<sup>1</sup> Born in Normandy in 1386; died in 1458. He wrote besides *LE CURIAL*, *L'ESPÉRANCE*, *LE QUADRILLOGE*.

<sup>2</sup> Etienne Pasquier, *RECHERCHES DE LA FRANCE*, l. v. ch. xviii.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE DRAMA.

**The Drama in the Church.**—The drama of the Middle Ages, no less than its history, discovers to us modern thought, germinating in the bosom of the Church, from whose fostering care, as it grew to maturity, it separated itself, to lead an independent and distinct life.

The theatre of a past age cannot be understood by a study of the mere dialogue which has been bequeathed to us in the pages of a dramatic author. The thousand passions which it awoke in the soul of the spectators,—the restless attention, the *naïf* astonishment, the terror, the pity,—all must be taken into consideration. The written drama is but the spring which put all that complex machinery into motion, the explorer that goes down into the depths of the human heart to discover the thoughts and opinions which education, religious belief, and daily habit, have stored up in it. Therefore, those who despise the mediæval drama, because of the inanimate fragments that remain to us, are at fault; for their coarse details, which shock our literary taste, brought close to the people the objects of their most serious and constant meditations—judgment, heaven, hell, the miracles and passion of their Lord, the future of the soul of man. The people asked for no laborious preparations, no learned combina-



tions. Their faith and religious emotion outstripped the words, and the miraculous alone seemed likely to their miracle-filled souls. To them nature was no impassible mechanism, bound down by eternal and irrevocable laws, but a divine creation, full of holy influences, for ever subject to the will of its Creator and the all-prevailing intercession of the Just. The universe quailed at the voice of man, the grave gave up its prey, Heaven sent down unutterable visions, the statues of the saints moved on their stone pedestals. At night man listened for the plaintive voice of the departed; by day he looked fearfully for the sound of the last trump. The earth was so unhappy, they did well to comfort themselves with hopes of heaven. Religious services were much even to kings and princes—to the people they were everything. Their true country was heaven; their home upon earth, the Church; their purest pleasure, the solemn grandeur of Catholic worship, which, for the time, made them forget their misery, and intoxicated them with light, and incense, and song. No wonder, then, that they looked forward to the return of her great festivals. What joy for them to see the Babe of Bethlehem born year by year in their midst; to sing glad welcomes around His cradle; to shout exultant songs of triumph at His victory over the grave; and to hymn His re-entrance into the kingdom whither He went to prepare a place for them! The tiniest child could draw near to this Baby in a fair young Mother's arms, and the old man looked back over a weary waste of years, where such regularly-recurring festivals were amongst the few bright memories.

The Church responded wonderfully to this craving of the people. Her worship was a continuous dramatic representation. What more noble theatre than those vast Gothic piles, which soared in lofty grandeur heavenward.

as to the God in whose honour they were built, while insignificant man covered but the pavement. The intense cloud, catching the rainbow's colours from the "storied panes," curled upwards; gorgeous banners waved among the arches; twinkling tapers made a glimmering in the vaulted dimness, as long, sumptuously-clothed processions wound their way through aisle and by altar, to the measured sound of organ and of choir. Every detail was represented dramatically—the manger at Christmas, the star at the Epiphany, the palms before Easter, the sepulchre on Good Friday. The ritual prescribed the very words of the actors as well as their acts. Here was the germ of the Christian theatre—of the *Mysteries*, drawn from holy Scripture, and the *Miracles*, from the Lives of the Saints. The *Sequence*, chanted before the Gospel, was at first only a melodious modulation of the doxology. This was in time replaced, on the festivals of saints, by a dialogue between two priests, who mounted the *jube* and sang alternately, in Latin and the vulgar tongue, the praises of the saint the Church was that day celebrating. These dialogues were called, doubtless from the twofold idiom, *epistolæ farcitæ*, and are the first instance of the introduction into religious worship of the vernacular, which soon became exclusively used in the drama.

Some curious proofs of the transition from the narrative form of the Bible to the dramatic form of the Mysteries are extant. They consist of dialogues in verse between several speakers, bound together by a narration, also in verse, which formed a part analogous to the Greek chorus. They were evidently accompanied in some degree by music, for in the most ancient manuscripts each line is surmounted by its musical notation.

Another influence besides that of Catholic worship was at work to produce the mediæval drama: in the traditional

taste for scenic displays which the Greek Church had nursed on the fall of the pagan theatre by representations of sacred subjects, and which indeed had never died out amongst the Romanised peoples of southern Europe. "It has been conjectured," says Hallam,<sup>1</sup> "not improbably, though without necessity, that the pilgrims, of whom great numbers repaired to the East in the eleventh century, might have obtained notions of scenical dialogue, with a succession of characters, and with an ornamented apparatus, in which theatrical representation properly consists."

But, as we have said, the nations of Southern Europe had, in defiance of the clergy, maintained their mimes and pantomimes, whilst the North had never shaken off the essentially dramatic customs of pagan superstition.

Even in the days of the greatest glory of the Greek and Roman stage, popular amusements analogous to our buffoons and rope-dancers had been the fashion. Xenophon, Apuleius, Lucian, and especially Athenæus, have left us curious accounts of them. The art-remains of Herculaneum present us in the dress and mimic gestures, and even in the shoes, of the *sanniones* and *mimi*, with the models of the buffoons of Italian comedy. Such representations, easy and inexpensive, requiring for their enjoyment no high degree of culture and no great refinement of literary taste, survived the classic drama, and formed a link between Christian and barbarian games. Bond or free, conquered or conquering, there was always a craving for scenic pleasures. Hence the retention of pagan traditions, such as the planting of trees, the king of the bean, New Year and Christmas observances, and many funeral ceremonies. Even in the Church itself there was the Festival of Sub-Deacons and of Fools, in which the bounds of

<sup>1</sup> LITERATURE OF EUROPE, i. p. 215.

morality were overstepped,—a sort of Christian Saturnalia, of which the presiding idea was that so dear to the people and so conformable to the democratic tendencies of Christianity—the primitive equality of all men. Such days were the short make-weights for a year's servitude. The Festival of *Deposuit*, as it was called, in allusion to the words in the MAGNIFICAT, *Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles* which the people chanted vigorously three times over, rejoiced their hearts, for they saw for that one day the princes of the Church come down from their exalted dignity, and give up its insignia to the lowest of their subordinates, who for the time were *abbots, bishops, and popes—of fools*.

Thus not only the serious drama, but dramatic farce, owe their introduction into France to the influence of the sanctuary. Even dancing was not excluded from the ceremonies of religion, and its prohibition by a council assembled at Rome in the pontificate of Eugenius II. was powerless to prevent it. Amongst other curious testimony on the subject, is a statute of the diocese of Besançon, authorising a dance at Easter “in the cloister, or in the midst of the nave of the church, if the weather was rainy,” which was to be accompanied by songs in honour of the resurrection of the Lord. At Limoges the people used to dance in the church on S. Martial's day, singing the meanwhile a litany, the burden of which was, “S. Martial, pray for us, and we will dance for you.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in the Middle Ages the word *carol*, which we still retain in English in its sense of a Christmas hymn, meant both a Christmas hymn and a joyous dance.

These lively dances, begun in the church, were often finished in the adjoining graveyard, and it seems likely

<sup>2</sup> *San Marceau, pregas per nous,  
E nous epingarem per vous.*

that this dancing amongst the graves of the departed may have suggested the famous mediæval pictures of the Dance Macabre<sup>3</sup> in the Campo Santo at Pisa, and on the covered bridge at Lucerne, and others, where—

“The grim musician  
Leads all men through the mazes of that dance.”

**Mysteries.**—In time these ecclesiastical dramatic representations were separated from the divine office, and though still performed in churches, formed a distinct part of priestly teaching, and under the name of *mysteries*, were acted after the sermon. Such religious plays have not yet been wholly discontinued. The miracle-play (which in the Middle Ages, when the name *miracle* was generally given to plays founded on the lives of the saints, would have been called a mystery, inasmuch as it represented historic portions of the Old and New Testaments) of Ober-Ammergau, is a well-known instance which will readily occur to the reader. Bayard Taylor, in his *EL DORADO*, describes one he saw in Mexico, and other writers mention similar exhibitions.

The earliest *mystery* extant, written partly in the popular tongue of the French people, is on the subject of *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, and belongs probably to the eleventh century. The language is a curious mixture of Latin and the dialect of southern France.

The *Jeu de S. Nicholas* belongs to northern France. In the eleventh century Hilarius, a disciple of Abelard, substituted for the *prose* of the old ritual for the Feast of S. Nicholas a dialogue in Latin rhyme, with refrains in the *Langue d'Oil*. A monk of S. Benoît-sur-Loire later on

<sup>3</sup> This *Danse Macabre*, or Dance Micawber, was so called from S. Macarius, one of the earliest Egyptian solitaries, who is the principal figure in Orcagna's celebrated picture. The first printed representation of the *Danse Macabre* appeared in Paris in 1485, published by Guyot Marchand.

treated the same history in simple Latin. Both these pieces were acted in the churches for nearly a century, when Jean Bodel of Arras founded upon them a drama which was written entirely in French, and which was probably acted in the public square of Arras, or in the hall of some large dwelling. This was the emancipation of the drama from the Church. The *trouvères* of the thirteenth century followed readily in the lead of Jean Bodel. Amongst others we may mention Adam de la Halle, the fellow-townsmen of Bodel, nicknamed *Le Bossu d'Arras*, and the witty enemy of the monks, the satirical Rutebœuf. The laity formed themselves into companies and guilds to act these pieces. Such associations were established in a serious spirit of piety and beneficence, without any thought of antagonism to the Church; but before the end of the thirteenth century they had robbed the clergy of a great part of their influence, and, in the course of the fourteenth, became the means of paralysing it entirely. From henceforth the theatre took a wider scope. Art laboured to supply the ever-increasing weakness of religious impressions. Creations of the poet's fancy appeared side by side with Scriptural characters; popular scenes became by degrees more common; and hence little by little arose the drama of our own day,—a light amusement, intended for the pastime of an idle crowd.

**Confraternities.**—The most celebrated, though one of the latest founded, of these confraternities, was the *Confrérie de la Passion et Résurrection de notre Seigneur*. It was composed of Paris citizens—master-masons, lock-smiths, and others. The first scene of their representations was the village of S. Maur, near Vincennes. The Provost of Paris refusing his license, the *Confrérie* applied to, and received the authorisation of Charles VI., who, by letters patent in 1402, gave permission to them to act

"any mystery whatsoever, either before the king or before his people, in any suitable place, either in the town of Paris itself or in its suburbs." Upon this they established themselves in the Hospital of the Holy Trinity, outside the Porte S. Denis. There, on public holidays, they gave representations of pieces drawn from the New Testament. Crowds both of clergy and laity flocked to them. The Church did all in its power to further their success, altering the hour of Vespers to facilitate the attendance at them of the faithful. The Præmonstratensians, owners of the Hospital of the Holy Trinity, gladly let for them their spacious hall. The spectators sat on unwearied often till night fell, and then the assembly broke up to meet again on the next Sunday for the continuation of the interrupted drama, which sometimes lasted for months at a time. The stage consisted of tiers of scaffolding raised one above another, the topmost tier with its gilt balustrade representing paradise, and holding the "*chaire parée*," which did duty as the throne of the Most High. "In pomp of show they far excelled our English mysteries,"<sup>4</sup> and the mixture of tragedy and comedy in the poetry appealed powerfully to the quick susceptibilities of an impressionable nation, which delights in nothing so much as in extremes and contrasts.

The shadows of the coming Renaissance gradually eclipsed the glory of these mediæval mysteries. The divine prestige of faith in the lustre of which they had shone grew clouded. The *Procureur-Général* of Paris, like many of our own contemporaries, seeing in them nothing more than the rude efforts of ignorant and unlettered men, set himself against their continuance. Public opinion sided with him, and ridicule, that weapon so deadly to a Frenchman, was unsheathed against them.

<sup>4</sup> Hallam, *LIT. OF EUROPE*, vol. i. p. 218.

The days of mysteries were numbered. Parliament, in renewing the license of the *Confrérie* on the 17th November 1548, expressly forbade, as indecent and profane, the representation of Scriptural subjects, and thus signed the death-warrant of the first established body of Parisian actors.

**Moralities.**—Akin to the Mysteries were the Moralities which, a writer of that day<sup>5</sup> tells us, “represent in a measure the tragedy of the Greeks and Romans . . . in which noble and virtuous actions, if not true, at least probable, and that which makes our instruction in life, is treated of.”

This change from mysteries to moralities corresponded to a remarkable modification of the public mind. Reason, eager to produce and combine ideas, had been substituted for the simple, unquestioning faith of the Middle Ages. Allegory, no longer the concrete and material rendering of undisputed facts, became a work of intelligence, abstraction, and analysis. Nature, her high and undying loveliness unguessed, appeared common-place and insipid, and in want of the fictitious combinations of imagination. The mind of man, having shaken itself free from its old trammels, sometimes in its pride and joy abused its new-found freedom.

The success of the mysteries, and still more their decline, excited the emulation of the members of the *Basoche*,<sup>6</sup> the guild of the clerks of the palace. This guild; established by Philip the Fair about 1303, had by him been granted special privileges: a particular jurisdiction, a *king* who wore a cap like that of the sovereign of France, a tri-colour flag and cockade, magnificent reviews, processions, and theatrical representations. If the unlettered citizens of Paris could draw admiring crowds to

<sup>5</sup> Sibilet, ART POÉTIQUE (1548).

<sup>6</sup> From Basilica.



their mysteries, why should not the *Basochiens*, with their superior cultivation and their royal charter, attract crowds as large? They would have nothing to say to *Scriptural subjects*, they would invent their own themes and their own style. They would have dialogues between *Prudence* and *Imprudence*, between *Good-End* and *Bad-End*, between *Fast* and *Prayer*, the sister of *Alms-giving*; their heroes should be such men as *Hope-of-long-Life*, *Shame-to-own-his-Sons*, *Despair-of-Pardon*, *Scum-of-the-Earth*, *Blood-of-Abel*, *Flesh*, and *Spirit*.

In one of such dramas the gay boon-companions, *Eat-All*, *Thirst*, *Drink-to-You*, and *Sans-Water*, are politely invited by the rich and splendid *Banquet*. The ladies of the party are *Daintiness*, *Gluttony*, and *Lust*. The feast is all that can be desired, the guests are more than satisfied, when suddenly a band of enemies—*Colic*, *Gout*, *Jaundice*, *Quinsy*, and *Dropsy*—rush in and seize the assembled revellers by the leg, or the throat, or the stomach, as the case may be. Some are overwhelmed, some rush for succour to *Sobriety*, who calls *Cure* to help him; *Banquet* is condemned to death by the judge *Experience*, and *Diet* is his executioner.

The step from such pieces as these to farces was but a short one. Indeed it was necessary. Moralities could not have long enchained the attention of the people, on whom a refinement of satirical wit is generally thrown away. The mysteries no longer made them weep,—it would be well to make them laugh, and farce was invented.

These farces were much shorter than ordinary comedy, and do not seem to have aimed at any definite correction of abuses. They "may be reckoned," says Hallam, "a middle link between the extemporaneous effusions of the mimes and the legitimate drama."

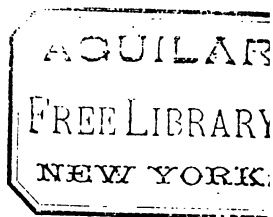
The best piece of this kind is the *Avocat Patelin*, which may indeed be said to be the master-piece of the French Middle Age theatre. It was first printed in 1490, under the title of *Maître Patelin*, and was then ascribed, though apparently without sufficient authority, to Pierre Blanchet, a native of Poitiers.<sup>7</sup> Three hundred years afterwards, in the beginning of the last century, Brueys again, having made many important alterations, put it upon the Paris stage, where its sallies of humour were received with much delight, a remarkable testimony to its superior excellence.<sup>8</sup>

From the union of farce and morality sprang the *sotie*, in which satire was pre-eminent. A new company discovered and worked this dramatic vein,—the *Enfants sans Souci*, a gay reunion of young Parisians, who rivalled Aristophanes in their bold and biting sarcasm. Religion, politics, public or private life, nothing was safe from their attacks. Their chief was called the Prince of Fools, but his subjects were the whole human race. Charles VI. granted them permission to raise stages for the performance of their pieces in the public market-places. Louis XII. made an ally of their caustic wit in his quarrels with Pope Julius II., and listened without chagrin to hear himself charged with avarice. No order in the State escaped: *Dissolute-Fool*, wore the dress of an ecclesiastic; *Vain-glorious-Fool*, of a *gendarme*; *Deceiving-Fool*, of a trader. The interests of nations were represented by such characters as *Dame-Pragmatic*, who quarrelled with the Legate, and *Italian-People*, who groaned beneath the government of the clerically-dressed *Mother-Fool*. Such license often provoked repression.

<sup>7</sup> Born in 1459.

<sup>8</sup> The expression "*Revenons à nos moutons*," is taken from this farce.

Kings and parliaments authorised, suspended, and forbade in turn such danger-fraught representations. Francis I. established theatrical censure, and proscribed farces and *soties*, and at last public taste forsook them for tragedy and comedy in imitation of the ancient theatre, for the *Renaissance* was drawing near. Marot was an *Enfant sans Souci*.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY—AN AGE OF TRANSITION.

**Transition.**—The history of the fifteenth century is that of the gradual extinction of the feudal system, and marks the term of that period in the world's history which we call the Middle Ages. The chivalry of France was wounded to death by the citizen-archers of England on the fields of Cressy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, and the introduction of artillery was a new epoch in the science of war. The proud Pontiffs on the throne of S. Peter gave up their dream of universal empire, and only sought to secure the temporal sovereignty of Italy. The imperious Boniface VIII. had been driven mad with shame and rage by a blow from the mailed hand of a subject, and Clement V. had dissolved the last remains of Christian chivalry, and condemned the Knights Templars to the stake. The great schism had burst, and in the first years of the century the Council of Pisa proclaimed the need of Church reform. Mathieu de Clémengis<sup>1</sup> wrote his *DE CORRUPTO ECCLESIE STATU*; John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and the bones of John Wicliffe, were burnt by a decree of the Council of Constance; and more than fifty years later, but still before the close of the century, the

<sup>1</sup> Rector of the University of Paris, the writer of several treatises. He died in 1440.

wife of the poor miner, Hans Luther, brought into the world the boy she called Martin.

Thus two old-world powers, Catholicism and feudalism, were tottering on their thrones, while in the meantime a third, hitherto unknown to modern history, was growing up to importance and strength. This new power—the people—first showed itself in France, in the insurrection of the Jacquerie and the disturbances in Paris under Provost Marcel (1358), and again in even more formidable guise in the attack on the Bastille in 1413. In 1461 the *bourgeois* and anti-chivalric spirit ascended the throne of France in the person of Louis XI., the triumphant rival of the bold and valiant Dukes of Burgundy, the representatives of feudalism.

The fifteenth century was essentially an age of transition. Dr Arnold, in criticising Communes' Memoirs, says, "They relate to a tranquil period immediately preceding a period of extraordinary movement; to the last stage of an old state of things, now on the point of passing away. Such periods, the lull before the burst of the hurricane, the almost oppressive stillness which announces the eruption, or to use Campbell's beautiful image,

'The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below,'

are always, I think, full of a very deep interest. But it is not from the mere force of contrast with the times that follow, nor yet from the solemnity which all things wear when their dissolution is fast approaching; the interest has yet another source: our knowledge, namely, that in that tranquil period lay the germs of the great changes following, taking their shape for good or for evil, and sometimes irreversibly, while all wore an outside of unconsciousness."

**Popular Literature.**—In literature a like change was being effected. Communes succeeded Froissart;

Villon took the place of the *trouvères*; the *basochiens* ousted the old mystery actors; even the pulpit did not escape the common destiny. The rough eloquence of Menot, Maillart, Raulin, and their contemporaries, was as democratic in its inspiration as plebeian in its style, and attacked the princes and great ones of the earth. In short, France in the fifteenth century had but one language, but one style of eloquence,—the language of the lowest as of the highest, the eloquence which appealed to the hearts of the people.

Poetry, no less than pulpit oratory, gives evidence of this. Olivier Basselin, a fuller of Normandy, born in the beginning of the fifteenth century, was the author of numerous gay verses suited to the popular taste, which he called from his native valleys *Vaux-de-Vire*, a name which in its corrupted form, and somewhat changed meaning, gives us the *Vaudeville* of our own day.

But the most remarkable poet of this time is François Villon, a scholar of the University of Paris. He was born of poor parents in 1431, and seems to have made little progress in his studies. He was twice sentenced to be hanged for larceny, but was respited first by Parliament, a second time by the favour of the king. His poems describe to us a narrow, common-place world of which he is the centre: his loves, his faults, his misfortunes. How different from the thrilling tales of heroic deeds and chivalrous love in which the *trouvères* delighted! One fine day he sets out on his travels by way of curing himself of a hopeless passion. Before starting he determines to make a will, leaving his all, poor beggar as he is! in legacy to his friends; a drunkard shall have his hogshead, poor scholars his nomination to the university, an over-fat friend two lawsuits by way of correcting his *embonpoint*. This legacy, generally called *Le*

PETIT TESTAMENT, is a rough sketch of his largest work, LE GRAND TESTAMENT, composed in the thirtieth year of his age.

The popular poetry of the fifteenth century was, like the minds of the people, wanting in moral dignity, and in familiarity with great objects and important interests. The miseries entailed by foreign invasion and incapable government, no less than their own ignorance, had degraded the nation. Yet in Europe generally much had been done for the cause of learning. A way had been prepared for the Renaissance by the revived study of Latin, and, in Italy at least, of Greek. Considerable progress had been made in mathematical science and in natural history. The French and English languages had acquired a superior degree of polish, and the invention of printing gave a stimulus to the increase of knowledge, of which the human mind gladly and readily availed itself. Of this great and pregnant invention Hallam says,<sup>3</sup> "All the Latin authors, hitherto painfully copied by the scholar, or purchased by him at inconvenient cost, or borrowed for a time from friends, became readily accessible, and were printed, for the most part, if not correctly, according to our improved criticism, yet without the gross blunders of the ordinary manuscripts. The saving of time which the art of printing has occasioned can hardly be too highly appreciated. Nor was the Cisalpine press unserviceable in this century, though it did not pour forth so much from the stores of ancient learning. It gave useful food, and such as the reader could better relish and digest. The historical records of his own nation, the precepts of moral wisdom, the regular metre that pleased the ear and supplied the memory, the fictions that warmed the imagination, and sometimes ennobled or

<sup>3</sup> *LIT. OF EUROPE*, vol. i. p. 247.

purified the heart, the repertories of natural phenomena, mingled as truth was on these subjects, and on all the rest, with error, the rules of civil and canon law that guided the determination of private right, the subtle philosophy of the scholastics, were laid open to his choice, while his religious feelings might find their gratification in many a treatise of learned doctrine according to the received creed of the Church, in many a legend on which a pious credulity delighted to rely, in the devout aspirations of holy ascetic men; but, above all, in the Scriptures themselves, either in the Vulgate Latin, which had by use acquired the authority of an original text, or in most of the living languages of Europe."

Such, then, is a brief recapitulation of the various advantages this new art had bestowed on mankind in the sphere of knowledge. The political changes of the last decade of this century were no less important: the conquest of Granada, the unity of the French kingdom by the annexation of Brittany, the incorporation of the Netherlands with the German Empire by the marriage of Maximilian with the last of the house of Burgundy, the Italian campaigns of the kings of France, the doubling of the Cape of Good Hope by Vasco de Gama, and the discovery of a new world by Columbus,—these, and such like events, pregnant with the fate of countries and of nations, marked the termination of feudal times, and heralded the dawn of a new era of enlightenment and progress.



## SECOND PERIOD.

### *The Renaissance.*

#### *CHAPTER VII.*

#### ROMAN JURISPRUDENCE—MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY—ORATORY.

**The Renaissance.**—The last decade of the fifteenth century must ever be memorable in the history of the human race. Spain had by the conquest of Granada become a great Christian kingdom. Brittany and Burgundy had been added to the crown of France. Maximilian, by the institution of the imperial chamber, had restored public order in the great Germanic Confederation. Christopher Columbus and Vasco de Gama had discovered new worlds. Even the fruitless expedition of Charles VIII. of France into Italy "had more effect on the destinies of Europe than all those occult causes of human progress which the philosopher of history loves to fathom." And all these great and pregnant changes followed, as we have seen, upon the discovery of printing, the most efficient handmaid ever given to literature; and the magnificent Lorenzo had, from his quiet gardens at Careggi, extended noble encouragement to letters throughout the length and breadth of Europe.

A glorious future lay before the breaking sixteenth century. The seeds sown by the great minds of the fourteenth and fifteenth had been germinating and blossoming, unheeded save by the few; but now, in this new age, the blossom was to ripen into fruit, whose rich clusters would hang down within the reach of many besides scholars. The contemptuous aversion to learning, which had been common since the gallant and high-spirited barbarians that overrun the Roman empire had cast scorn at the effeminate and degenerate guardians of letters and learning,<sup>1</sup> was about to pass away, and the patronage which had hitherto been the glory of Italian princes alone, was now to be shared by Maximilian of Germany, Frederic of Saxony (founder, in 1502, of the University of Wittenberg), Joachim of Brandenburg (founder of that of Frankfurt on the Oder), and the Archbishop Albert of Mainz.

The *Renaissance*, as it is called, was not a mere servile reproduction of antiquity; it was an harmonious fusion of the elements of Christian civilisation with the traditions of ancient taste and learning. Italy was the happy country in which these two streams blended their waters. Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, those indefatigable gleaners of the riches of the past, seem, in their writings in their own vernacular, to have attempted nothing more than a recasting of the rude materials they found in mediæval France. The one gave a character of beauty to the pious legends of the *trouvères*, the other to the songs of the *troubadours*. Ariosto, in his *ORLANDO FURIOSO*, preserved that spirit of knight-errantry so dear

<sup>1</sup> Luitprandus (LEGATIO APUD MURAT. SCRIPTOR. ITALIC., vol. ii. pars 1, p. 481) tells us that the worst name with which they could brand an enemy was that of Roman: "*Hoc solo, id est Romani nomine, quicquid ignobilitatis, quicquid timiditatis, quicquid avaritiæ, quicquid luxuriæ, quicquid mendaciæ, immo quicquid vitiorum est comprehendentes.*"

to the epic poets of France of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He adopted, it is true, the irregular plan of popular Italian bards, but ancient poetry is the generous blood which circulates freely through this modern form, and perpetually manifests itself by classical images and expressions. Tasso's plan was exactly the reverse: ancient art supplied the outward form, religion and chivalry animated and inspired it.

Italy had extended a warm welcome to each revival of literature, and found for it a congenial home. The restoration of classical taste and Greek letters is indisputably her work: France and England did but follow readily in her lead. The work, indeed, was easier for her. She had but to reconcile national Catholicism and classical tradition. No hindrance arose to delay the reconciliation, no counter-attraction to damp her enthusiasm. Leo X. chose scholars for his secretaries and librarian, invited John Lascaris and Marcus Musurus to reside in Rome, and promoted and encouraged a vigorous search for manuscripts. The Alps sheltered Italy from that war of theological controversy which beyond them was checking the progress of philosophical and philological literature.

How different was the lot of France! Two opposing creeds in the same nation; eight civil wars; two murdered kings; a king, the murderer of his people; an age tormented by the two phantoms of the past and the future; feudalism striving to lift up her head and to possess the country; democracy passing from Protestants to Catholics, and entering into a strange alliance with theocracy; in a word, two alien races offering their self-interested help to the two factions, and engaging in fierce conflict on French soil,—the dark genius of the North against the fiery *demon of the South*. Such is the history of France in the sixteenth century. Then comes the long-looked-for

*dénouement* of the bloody tragedy. The tumult ceases, passions are hushed, and politics fall asleep in a long monarchical truce,—a solution of the difficulty as provisional as are all other earthly solutions. Unity springs out of the reconciliation of ideas. The publication of the Edict of Nantes consecrated civil toleration. The State, not the Church as in days gone by, was to be from henceforth the bond of union. France was to embrace differing faiths. A Huguenot king was to declare himself a Catholic; the ecclesiastics of the League were to turn royalist. Education, even in the hands of the clergy, was to become altogether classical, and French art in great measure pagan in form.

In France, as in the rest of Europe, the flood of modern ideas carried along in its onward course the imperishable remains of ancient civilisation, and it was not till the seventeenth century that the teeming, turbid waters settled into limpidity. There is as great disaccord in the writings of the sixteenth century as in its factions. Idea and form, life and beauty, strive in vain to unite. "In our tongue," says Montaigne, "I find plenty of matter, but little manner;" and it is true that at that time those who could think could write but little, and those who set themselves to write never cared to think. One set produced speeches, memoirs, pamphlets, satires, dogmatical and polemical treatises, philosophical essays, all that represents the mind and soul of the century; the other was a young and daring school of disciples of ancient art, who aimed at creating a noble language and a serious poetry, which, alas! they forgot to endow with a soul. This divorce between the animating thought and the literary form seems to us the most striking characteristic of the literature of the sixteenth century. Doubtless there were authors of rare gifts. Who, for instance, more sparkling and original than

Montaigne? who gayer and more fertile than Rabelais? But the language of these great writers belongs only to themselves,—each improvises for the actual need of his own thoughts, and French genius required a language which should be logical, regular, and universal. Therefore the native literature of the sixteenth century is not as remarkable as the impetus given to learning. In ten years Paris alone issued 430 editions, of which 32 were of Latin classics. In 1507, Giles Gourmont, a printer of that city, set up the first important Greek press on this side the Alps. By the help of Aleander a learned Italian, invited to Paris by Louis XII., Gourmont published a Greek and Hebrew alphabet in 1508, and some of the moral works of Plutarch in 1509. The book of Job in Hebrew appeared in Paris in 1516. In 1518, Francis I. requested John Lascaris, who had already been in the service of his predecessors, Charles VIII. and Louis XII., to undertake the organisation of various literary institutions in Paris.

**Italy.**—The inspiration of all this, as we have before urged, came from Italy. Already, in the preceding age, there had blown from that country a breath of revival. Round the throne of Charles VI. were three celebrated Italian women: his sister-in-law, Valentina of Milan; his wife, Isabella of Bavaria, of the house of Visconti; and the learned and modest Christina of Pisa. When once France was set free from her English wars, a powerful attraction drew her to the happy and highly civilised country that lay beyond the Alps. The young nobles who surrounded Charles VIII. dreamt of nothing but beautiful Italy,—her riches and her delights. The soft southern sky and the beguiling charms of the fair land over which it hung, were as a first revelation of the arts to the rugged sons of Duguesclin and Lahire. Under

Louis XII. this revelation bore its fruits. The Cardinal-Minister, George d'Amboise, fired with emulous admiration by a sight of the creations of Bramante and Da Vinci, made himself the centre of a new movement, and inaugurated one of the finest periods of French architecture. "France was going to be an Italy more Italian than Italy itself."<sup>2</sup>

Francis I. in his turn was known as a protector of Italian art, and a friend of Italian artists. For him Primaticcio came to Fontainebleau to display his poetic imagination and his powerful and voluptuous elegance, and at his bidding Jean Cousin founded a French school of painting. On all sides throughout France, châteaux of the Renaissance took the place of the old feudal strongholds. The whole nobility, weary of their dull life in their gloomy, solitary, hereditary fortresses, gladly flocked round their chivalric king in his beautiful and sumptuous palaces, where life seemed one long festival. Thither thronged in emulous haste *grands seigneurs* and their young wives, artists, men of learning,—a brilliant and unwonted concourse,—which welcomed science as an unaccustomed luxury, and new opinions as a hitherto untasted feast for the imagination. Nor did this Italian influence die with Francis. In the time of Catherine de Medici, it took official possession of the throne of the Valois. This Catherine brought with her from her native Florence a taste for the fine arts, and not only protected artists, but shared herself in their labours. Philibert de Lorme, who built for her the Palace of the Tuileries, praises her in his *TRAITÉ DE L'ARCHITECTURE* (1567) for the great delight she took in architecture, and alludes to her *pourtrayant et esquichant* (portraying and sketching) the plans and outlines of the buildings raised

<sup>2</sup> FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW, 1869. "Leonardo da Vinci."

by her command. It was under her ascendancy, lasting through three reigns, that the Renaissance found its loftiest and most significant artistic expression—poetry, and this art, like painting and sculpture, drew its inspiration from Italy. Even the young warriors at the Courts of the House of Valois made use of Tuscan idioms which they had learned in the campaigns of Charles, or in their intercourse with the Queen and her maids of honour.

The study of the Italian literature of the day brought with it necessarily the study, then so popular in Italy, of the works of Greece and Rome. Early in the fifteenth century, the enthusiastic devotion of Italian scholars to ancient literature had threatened to put an end to a national one of their own. The capture of Constantinople in 1453 had driven the few learned Greeks remaining there to seek an asylum in Italy, where, in return for the warm welcome they received, they gave lessons in their native tongue.

**Study of Greek.**—On the 19th of January 1458, the University of Paris received a request from one Gregory,<sup>3</sup> born at Tiferno in the Kingdom of Naples, to appoint him to the professorial chairs of Greek and Rhetoric. The request was acceded to, but the new learning met with but little favour from the disciples of the old system, and bore but little fruit. It was, however, from one of the pupils of Tifernas that the young German Reuchlin acquired, about the year 1470, the first elements of the Greek language. Some years later, Reuchlin, having continued his studies under a native Greek at Basle, returned to Paris, and became a pupil of George Hermonymus of Sparta, the only teacher of Greek at that time in France. Erasmus said of Hermonymus

<sup>3</sup> Known to English scholars as Gregory Tifernas.

that "he stammered his mother tongue, and was neither willing nor able to teach it."<sup>4</sup> His pupils fortunately compensated for the inefficiency of his teaching by their devotion to study. "I have given my whole soul," says Erasmus, who was one of them, "to Greek learning, and as soon as I get any money, I shall first buy Greek books and then clothes."<sup>5</sup> "If any new Greek book comes to hand, I would rather pledge my cloak than not obtain it."<sup>6</sup>

**Printing.**—The books of which Erasmus speaks were probably manuscripts, of which Italy was constantly sending supplies. Happily, before long books increased prodigiously in number, and decreased rapidly in price. The art of block-printing, practised in China from time immemorial, had found its way into Europe, where it had first been used in the production of playing-cards and rude pictures of the saints. To these pictures were sometimes added a few lines of letters, likewise cut in the block. These lines grew in time to pages, and pages into books.<sup>7</sup> There is a tradition that, as early as 1430, Lawrence Costa of Haarlem conceived the idea of substituting moveable for fixed types, and that a faithless servant, possessed of the secret, fled to Strasburg or Mainz, and set up for himself. However this may be, the invention of printing is generally attributed to Gutenberg of Mainz, who, entering into partnership with a rich merchant called Faust, obtained from him the supplies of money necessary to carry his invention into effect. This was about 1450. Two years after, in 1452, Peter Schœffer,

<sup>4</sup> *Unus Georgius Hieronymus Græce balbutiebat, sed talis ut neque potuisset docere si voluisset, neque voluisset si potuisset.*—ERASMI EPISTOLA, lviii.

<sup>5</sup> ERASMI EPISTOLA, xxix.

<sup>6</sup> EPIST., lviii.

<sup>7</sup> These books, of which nine or ten still exist, were all impressed in the Netherlands, and never consisted but of very few pages. They are supposed to have been issued between 1400–1440.



an assistant of Gutenberg's, brought the invention to perfection by devising an easier mode of casting types.<sup>8</sup>

In 1469, Fichet, Rector of the Sorbonne, induced Ulrich Gering, and two of Faust's pressmen, to come to Paris. The new presses produced seven hundred and fifty-one books in the remaining years of the fifteenth century; and in the first decade of the sixteenth, no less than eight hundred publications, of which some were Greek, issued from it. In 1512, the learned Italian, Aleander, was made Rector of the University of Paris, and taught Greek and probably Hebrew.

**Collège de France.**—This Aleander had been welcomed to Paris, and pensioned by Louis XII. But it was Francis I. who obtained from his people the glorious title of "Father of French Literature," and certainly, whatever were his many faults, he was consistent in his love and patronage of letters. Directly the Peace of Cambray gave him leisure, he set himself to the encouragement of learning, and founded the Royal Trilingual College, as Marot calls it, from its three endowed Professorships of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. To these were added Medicine, Mathematics, and Philosophy. It was the first attempt in France to secularise education, and had, in consequence, to encounter the jealousy of the University. Vatable was the first Professor of Hebrew, and Danès of Greek. Lambin or Lambinus, celebrated for his editions of Horace, Cicero, Plautus, Lucretius, and Demosthenes, became Greek Professor in 1561. His commentaries were a real acquisition to classical learning, but the prolixity and tediousness of his style have been much con-

<sup>8</sup> The earliest printed book is now generally believed to be the Latin Bible, called the Mazarin Bible, from a copy of it found in Mazarin's library at Paris. It is variously ascribed to 1450, '52, and '55, of which the latter seems the most probable, though the "Cologne Chronicle" refers it the former date.

demned, and have added the words *lambin* and *lambiner* to the French tongue.

Bound up with the history of the College of France, the creation of Francis, is the literary glory of Budé or Budæus, who determined the king to found it. A contemporary and friend of Erasmus (1467-1536), he was a fellow-pupil with him of Hermonymus. Later he studied under Constantine Lascaris of the Imperial Family of Constantinople, and became by general confession the most profound Greek scholar in Europe. His *COMMENTARIUM LINGUÆ GRÆCÆ*, published at Paris in 1529, "have been the text-book and common storehouse of succeeding lexicographers. . . . So copious and exact is his work, that no student can read the Greek orators to the best advantage unless he consults the Commentaries of Budæus."<sup>9</sup>

It was especially in the second half of the sixteenth century that French learning took a distinctive character, and became truly scientific. By degrees she neglected more and more that elegance of form for which the Italians, with Bembo at their head, laboured so hard, and German vigour won the victory over Italian purity. The great scholars of the sixteenth century, the two Scaligers, Isaac Casaubon, Justus Lipsius, flourished: Henri Estienne gave his *THESAURUS LINGUÆ GRÆCÆ*, as a worthy successor to the *THESAURUS LINGUÆ LATINÆ* of his father; and Conrad Gesner, the most comprehensive scholar of his age, published his *MITHRIDATES*, "the earliest effort on a great scale to arrange the various languages of mankind by their origin and analysis."

It was too in this second half of the century that Paulus Manutius, Sigonius of Modena, and Panvinus in Italy, and Gruchius or Gruchy in France, published their

<sup>9</sup> QUARTERLY REVIEW, vol. xxii.

works on that most interesting part of Roman antiquity, the state of government and public law. Modern thought, strengthened by its intercourse with the great writers of ancient times, dared at length to investigate and discuss moral and political subjects. Roman law, which had never quite died out of Europe in the Middle Ages, had already been raised in Italy into a science. "Irnerius, by universal testimony, was the founder of all learned investigation into the laws of Justinian. He gave lectures upon them at Bologna, his native city, not long after the commencement of the twelfth century. And besides this oral instruction, he began the practice of making glosses, or short marginal explanations, on the law books, with the whole of which he was acquainted."<sup>1</sup> About a century after, Accursius of Florence undertook a collection of the glosses of the various writers on the subject from the time of Irnerius to his own. In the fourteenth century arose a new race of lawyers, who have been called scholastic jurists, from their having sought to apply the dialectic methods of the schoolmen to the exposition of jurisprudence. Of these the most conspicuous was Bartholus, who possessed an advantage over his predecessors in having a practical acquaintance with the exercise of justice. Politian, the brilliant favourite of the Medici, raised about 1480 to the chair of Greek and Latin eloquence at Florence, was the first to apply classical philology to the text of the jurists.

**French Lawyers.**—The science of theoretic law passed into France in the sixteenth century, when Andrea Alciati of Milan, the real restorer of Roman law, was invited by Francis I. to the great legal university of Bourges. Here he taught for five years, and founded that new school of which the Frenchman Cujacius, or Cujas as his

<sup>1</sup> HALLAM, vol. i. pt. i., ch. i.

countrymen call him, was the most illustrious member. Cujacius became professor at Bourges about the year 1555. Following in the steps of Alciat, he used his varied learning to make the science of jurisprudence attractive, and his great mental powers to make it lucid and intelligible. He carried into the study of Roman legislation the sagacity of an historian and the imagination of a poet. Dumoulin, an advocate of the Parliament of Paris, gave a somewhat similar impulse to French law. In a Commentary on the manners and customs of Paris, he established some general rules, and disengaged the principles which underlay the civil code, and thus prepared a way for the work of Pothier. At this time the lawyers of France were pre-eminent. A furious war raged between the adherents of Cujacius and the commentators on the one side, and their opponents, the advocates of civil law, headed by Hottoman, author of the *ANTI-TRIBONIANUS*,<sup>2</sup> on the other. The magistrature of France was made illustrious by such men as Pasquier, Talon, Séguier, Harlay, and De Thou. The end of the sixteenth century was more fruitful than any preceding age in the annals of political science. Throughout Europe there had been a progress more or less marked towards absolute monarchy. In France, especially, the will of the sovereign by this time knew no restraint, moral or political. The study both of Roman and of established law could not but instil notions of freedom and theories of constitutional polity into the minds of scholars. Public opinion on such subjects was affected by the inquiring spirit born of religious disputation. Hottoman, whom we have just mentioned, was a Protestant. In addition to his *ANTI-TRIBONIANUS*, he published, under the title of *FRANCO-GALLIA*,

<sup>2</sup> Written in 1567, published in French in 1609, and in the original in 1647.

a collection of passages from early French historians, in which the ancient share of the people in the government, and their right of electing their own kings, are insisted upon.

**La Boétie.**—Nearly thirty years before, Etienne de la Boétie,<sup>3</sup> a member of the Church, had published, when only eighteen years old, a short and vigorous treatise against the tyranny of kings, entitled DISCOURS SUR LA SERVITUDE VOLONTAIRE, OU LE CONTRE-UN. It was a burning philippic, full of the generous indignation of a youthful heart warm with a love of virtue, whose illusions, engendered by a superficial acquaintance with ancient history, had not been dispelled by mature knowledge and experience. He had received the stern education then common in the families of the magistrature. "We were up at four o'clock in the morning," says Henri de Mesme in his Memoirs, "and when we had said our prayers, we went at five o'clock to our studies, with our huge books under our arms, and our desks and candlesticks in our hands." "Pithou, Cujas, and I," says Loisel, another scion of the house of a magistrate, "assembled every evening after supper in the library, and worked there till three o'clock." The first labours of La Boétie were translations of Aristotle, Xenophon, and Plutarch, which helped him materially to acquire that masculine vigour of style which distinguishes the *CONTRE-UN*. He gave himself up to the study of antiquity, which his young imagination pictured as blessed with every advantage of serene liberty and equal privileges. He was rudely awakened from his dreams, and interrupted in his studies, by the terrible excesses of the insurrection against the salt-tax, and the awful vengeance

<sup>3</sup> Born at Sarlat in 1530, died in 1563, a counsellor of the Parliament of Bordeaux.

which the king's general, the cruel Montmorency, took on the people of Bordeaux. What a sight must those gibbets and scaffolds have presented to this ardent idealist of the free republics of antiquity! That very year (1540) he published his treatise. "How can it be," are his indignant words, "that so many men, so many villages, so many towns, so many nations, put up sometimes with the despotism of a single man who has no power but what is given him. . . . What a misfortune, or rather what an unfortunate vice, it is to see an infinite number—not obedient, but servile; not governed, but tyrannised over; having neither goods, nor children, nor even life itself, which they can call their own; enduring the lewdness, the pillage, the cruelties—not of an army, not of a barbarous camp, in opposition to whom it would be right to squander one's blood and one's life, but of a single man,—not of a Hercules, nor of a Sampson, but of one single insignificant man, often the most cowardly and effeminate of the whole nation!"

We recognise here the influence of ancient eloquence,—its contrasts, its surprises, its gradations, the amplitude of its developments and their ever-increasing heat. We can almost fancy we are reading in Livy the harangue of some ancient tribune when we read the conclusion of this noble outburst:—"He who so plays the master over you has but two eyes, has but two hands, has but one body. . . . Whence could he have so many eyes with which to spy, did you not give them to him? How has he so many hands to strike you, but that he takes your own? The feet with which he tramples on your cities, whence has he them if not from you? How has he any power over you but from yourselves? How would he dare to hunt you down, if he had not an understanding with you? How could he harm you, if you were not shelterers of the

thief that robs you, accomplices of the murderer who kills you, and traitors to yourselves? You sow your fruits that he may waste them; you fill and furnish your houses that he may despoil them; you rear your daughters that he may have wherewith to glut his wantonness; you rear your sons in order that he, at the best, may lead them to his wars or to butchery, or make them the instruments of his concupiscence, the ministers of his vengeance. You exhaust your bodies with labour that he may revel in luxury or wallow in base and vile pleasures; you weaken yourselves that he may become stronger, and able to hold you in check. And yet from so many indignities, which the very beasts, could they feel them, would not endure, you can free yourselves, if you do but try—not to free yourselves—but only to desire to do so. Once resolve to be no longer slaves, and you are free. I do not ask you to shake his seat nor to oust him—only do not hold him on—and you will see him, like some great Colossus robbed of its base, fall by his own weight and break in pieces.”

What a transformation the inspiration of antiquity had already produced in the French tongue! To the arch raillery and mocking satire of the *Trouvères* had succeeded, as if by enchantment, a dignified and powerful language, an echo of the Forum.

“La Boétie,” says Hallam, “is almost a single instance of a republican character till nearly the period of the Revolution.” His friend and admirer, Montaigne, tries to excuse his vehemence by assuring us that “there was never a better citizen, nor one more devoted to the repose of his country, or more opposed to the disturbances and innovations of his time.” Doubtless in his short life reflection and experience modified the harshness of his early sentiments; but he died when only thirty-two,

leaving behind him some agreeable poetry, but nothing so eloquent and energetic as that first stirring of the soul of the boy of sixteen.

**Bodin.**—Noble, however, as was its indignation, and glowing as was its patriotism, political philosophy required a calmer and more scientific expression. This was furnished by Bodin, the precursor of Montesquieu, as La Boétie had seemed to be of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

The *REPUBLIC* of Bodin was published in French in 1577, and in an enlarged form in Latin in 1586. It was the beginning of political science in Europe. Aristotle and Machiavelli could alone be compared with him. His mind was highly philosophical, his learning vast for a great thinker. He often confuses theory with erudition, and observation with the *à priori* method. He was less of a metaphysician than of a statesman. He was too much in advance of his age to influence the public mind, and yet his age had put its mark upon him. The learned and acute philosopher was a firm believer in magic, and wrote a book on *DEMOMANIA*. Even in the middle of his *RÉPUBLIQUE* he devotes a chapter to the strange fancies of astrology. In politics he was attached to a monarchical form of government, alarmed possibly by the anarchy which in his day seemed to threaten France; but above the absolute and uncontrolled power with which he would arm the sovereign, he recognises the eternal laws of right and conscience. He was unquestionably a man of great genius, and the imperfections of his work only show that social philosophy was then but in its infancy, and that the fruits of its maturity were to be patiently waited for.

It was not so with moral philosophy, which proposes for its object individual man. Not that it is easier to sound the depths of our nature than to examine the principles of society; but short of the lofty researches of



metaphysics, there is a middle region of philosophy, well fitted to exercise the observation of the wise and to excite the interest of readers; and this philosophy is open to all, for each carries within himself its secrets and its mysteries.

**Ramus.**—The philosophy of Aristotle, which in the early part of this century had reigned supreme in all the continental universities, and had been taken into alliance by the Church, was violently attacked by Pierre la Ramée or Ramus in its stronghold, the University of Paris. This man had been a servant to one of the colleges,<sup>4</sup> where he acquired a considerable knowledge of philosophy and languages, and in which he rose to the post of Principal. "I perceived," he writes, "to my great astonishment, that neither Cicero nor Virgil had in their writings adhered to the laws of the ORGANUM." From Cicero and Virgil he passed to Plato. His astonishment redoubled. "What a change!" he cries; "here are no subtle rules, no methodical chain of argument. Socrates is satisfied to discuss with good sense, and is willing to examine, and to appeal to reason rather than to authority." Then he asks himself if he cannot "*Socratize*" too, and the revolutionary standard is unfurled. Method has not yet been discovered, but logic has been set free. From henceforth reason, and not authority, is to be the guide of men.

Lord Bacon twice mentions Ramus,—once with contempt, once with qualified praise. But whatever may be the merits of his own method, Ramus at least has the credit of being the first successful assailer of the barbarous logic of the schoolmen. He became in time Professor of Philosophy and Eloquence at the *Collège de France*, and fell at last a victim to scholastic hatred, being strangled by his scholars in the Massacre of S. Bartholomew.

<sup>4</sup> Collège de Navarre.

Another celebrated servant of the Collège de Navarre was Jacques Amyot, the translator, and, we might almost say, the maker of the reputation of Plutarch. This translation, from its easy and natural style, inaugurated a new era in French literature. "We poor ignoramuses," says Montaigne, "would have been lost if this book had not lifted us out of the mire; thanks to it, we now dare to speak and write, and ladies can teach schoolmasters: it is our breviary."

Amyot, like Ramus, met with recompence. He was made tutor to the children of Henri II., Great Almoner of France, and Bishop of Auxerre.

**Montaigne.**—Michel Montaigne (1533–1592) combined in himself the simple *naïve* eloquence of Amyot and the independence of thought of Ramus. His *ESSAIS* were the first, and perhaps the best, fruit that moral philosophy bore in France. They were the first appeals addressed to laymen on those weighty subjects which the learned by profession had hitherto kept for their own judgment. Their principal charm is that in each line we are conscious that the writer is a man as well as an author. They are a discourse rather than a treatise, in which idea takes shape, and abstraction life. Born in Gascony, and brought up with the most tender care, he became, at the age of twenty-three, a counsellor at Périgueux. The life of a magistrate was most distasteful to him, and on the death of his father he abandoned it, and came to Paris (about 1575), where he received more than one appointment at Court. This career suited him better, and gave him opportunity to study mankind. On a visit to Italy, he was made, in 1581, a citizen of Rome. About the same time, the people of Bordeaux elected him mayor, but his indolence irritated the Bordelais. He made no effort to excuse himself: "I am so constituted that I would as

soon be happy as good, and owe my success to the grace of God rather than to my own efforts." Notwithstanding this, he was re-elected for two years. Whilst he was absent from Bourdeaux, the plague broke out, and Montaigne took good care to keep away. The aldermen wrote to him, urging him to preside at the approaching elections. Montaigne replied that he would go to a neighbouring village if the plague had not reached it, and give them his instructions there, concluding his letter by wishing them "a long and happy life." One can imagine the character of his book from the character of the man,—the "easy-going, happy man of the world, to whom, if we accept Horace Walpole's distinction, . . . life must have been at least half a comedy. . . . In Montaigne's egotism the strangest feature is that it is so utterly unnecessary, and, but for our previous knowledge of him, so unexpected. . . . He affects to be writing on general subjects, and often to be describing the heroes and philosophers of former times. Yet whether he be dealing with Julius Cæsar, or Seneca, or the Black Prince, or any other great man, Montaigne's own self is nearly sure to appear uncalled for in their place, and, like Banquo's ghost, to push them from their stools."<sup>5</sup> His style is fascinating, but "irregular and unconnected."<sup>6</sup> His work possesses every quality of excellence, without forming an harmonious whole. It seemed to be the fatality of the literature of the sixteenth century, that its very best should always lack that completing gift,—the beauty and perfection of the whole. The *ESSAIS* are like a precious mineral not yet cast into shape, or like that sidereal matter of which astronomers tell us distant nebulae are formed,—a rich and luminous fluid of which creative power makes stars.

<sup>5</sup> FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW, 1869, "Literary Egotism."

<sup>6</sup> "*Dérégulé et décousu*," Villemain.

To attempt to introduce regularity into them would be to spoil them, as the *TRAITÉ DE LA SAGESSE* of Montaigne's disciple and copyist Charron proves. Montaigne, Rabelais, and Machiavelli<sup>7</sup> produced the greatest effect on their age, and are almost the only writers of the sixteenth century, poets and historians excepted, who are read in the present day by any but scholars.

**Rabelais.**—Rabelais was the author of the most celebrated work of fiction of his age, *LA VIE DE GARGANTUA ET DE PANTAGRUEL*,—a “monstrous assemblage of high and ingenious morality and filthy corruption: where it is bad, it is worse than the worst; where it is good, it reaches highest excellence.”

His life was an image of his book. Born in a tavern, he always cherished a fondness for the life on which his eyes had first opened. By turns a Franciscan, a Benedictine, a doctor, a librarian, a secretary of legation, and a parish priest, he never ceased drinking and bantering and merry-making. He knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Spanish, German, Arabic, and could speak when he desired the most popular French of the *Trouvères*. He railed at all authority, and was for ever provoking reforms; yet he was encouraged and protected by bishops, cardinals, and ministers; and died in peace in his presbytery, a joke on his lips, at the very time that Despériers put an end to himself in prison, and Dolet was burned to death at the stake. He is the very type of the perpetual discordance of the sixteenth century,—that epoch so teeming, so powerful, and so original, and yet so lacking in harmony, proportion, and beauty.

*GARGANTUA* is an orgie of reason and of genius, a work of marvellous originality and riotous humour.

<sup>7</sup> An Italian, author of the celebrated work on political philosophy called “The Prince.”

Sainte-Beuve says of it:<sup>8</sup>—"Rabelais is our Shakspeare in comedy. In his own day he was an Ariosto within reach of the prosaic races of Brie, Champagne, Picardy, Touraine, and Poitou. He reproduced the names of provinces, villages, monasteries; the habits of convent, parish, university; the manners of schoolboys, judges, churchwardens, shopkeepers; and generally in order to turn them into ridicule. At the same time, he understood and satisfied the vulgar propensities, the upright good sense, and the roguish inclinations of the third estate in the sixteenth century.

"The book of Rabelais is a great feast—not one of those noble and delicate festivals of antiquity, at which golden cups crowned with flowers, ingenious witticisms, and philosophical remarks, went round to the sound of the lyre; not one of those delicious banquets of Xenophon's or Plato's, held under marble porticoes in the gardens of Scillus or of Athens; but a reeking orgie, a vulgar carouse, a Christmas wake, or, if you like it better, a long drinking song." His characters are admirably conceived, and his declamations against wars of invasion and his views on education marvellously in advance of his age; but his keenest shafts are aimed at the abuses of religion and the vices of her ministers. In this he showed himself a true child of the sixteenth century. †

**Reformation.**—Throughout the north of Europe a cry was rising up against the corruptions of churchmen. On the 10th of December 1520, Luther had burnt the Papal Bull at Wittenberg. In 1523, the Duke de Deuxponts had abolished in his dominions the ancient ceremonies of the church, and his example had been followed in Saxony, Hesse, Brandenburg, Brunswick, Denmark, Sweden, and Switzerland. In 1525, an insur-

<sup>8</sup> TABLEAU DE LA POÉSIE FRANÇAISE AU SEIZIÈME SIÈCLE.

rection of German peasants had demanded the establishment of the Gospel. In 1529, the Lutheran princes took the name of Protestant, and in the next year published at Augsburg their CONFESSION, embodying their creed. The colloquies of Erasmus had appeared in 1522. Some men of letters in France, amongst whom we may mention Ramus and Marot, and other persons of distinction, had embraced the reformed faith. Calvin himself was a Frenchman, and was protected by the Queen of Navarre. In Germany, it was the lower orders who were principally attracted by the preaching of Luther; in France, as we have seen, it was the cultivated and the educated that secretly threw off their allegiance to the Church of Rome.

Calvin had been educated at the famous university of Bourges. The only national characteristics he possessed were the intellectual qualities of logical precision and clearness. Cold and austere, he did not bow hearts as Luther did, but he entangled minds in the close folds of his syllogisms. His face was thin, his eye harsh and penetrating. The pomps and ceremonies by which the church sought to appeal to feeling and imagination were odious to him. On the 1st of August 1535, he published his INSTITUTION SUR LA RELIGION CHRÉTIENNE, dedicated to the King, Francis I. It was the greatest work the Reformation had produced, and was a methodical exposition of dogma and discipline. It aimed at being for Protestantism what the SUMMA of S. Thomas Aquinas (which Luther had burnt with the Pope's Bull at Wittenberg) had been for the Church of Rome, and indeed is still the guide of the sect of Calvinists. The dedication to the king is a masterpiece, in which skilful argument rises to eloquence. Like Protestant doctrines generally, it bore within it, though Protestant preachers little dreamt of it, the germs of democratic upheaval. Pushing S.

Augustine's doctrine of predestination to an extreme, he makes God more cruel and pitiless than the blind Fate of the ancients, and seems to insist that man has been created that the many may be lost and the few saved. When Geneva, aided by Francis, threw off the yoke of Savoy, it renounced its allegiance to Rome, and Calvin was made one of its ministers of religion. He was subsequently for a time banished from the city, but was soon reinstated, and succeeded in establishing that form of religion which still bears his name.

From Geneva, Calvinism spread into France, and for years that kingdom was distracted by religious animosities and disgraced by religious persecutions. All this time speculative minds throughout Europe were indulging in every vagary of free thought. It was time that Rome should bestir herself. Her days seemed numbered; the empire seemed passing from her. It was from Spain that help came in her hour of need. One man alone could not preserve the continuity of religious tradition, proclaim the doctrine of moral liberty, and protect the rights of feeling and imagination in worship. But one man began the work, and under his direction a new order—marvelously organised and disciplined, and sworn to absolute obedience—took upon itself the task of propping up and re-establishing the tottering power of the Roman Pontiff.

**Jesuits.**—Don Inigo Lopez de Recalde y Loyola, known to posterity as Ignatius Loyola, came of the *sauvage azul* of Castille. His childhood had been delighted by stories of knight-errantry, and his young imagination fired by the mystic chivalry of the Holy Grail. Crippled and disabled by a wound received at the siege of Pampeluna (1521), the ardent young soldier gave up his tales of chivalry for the legends of the saints, and the Holy Grail for Holy Church. The fervent imagination was the same,

but the object of its devotion was changed. His Lady was to be the Spotless Mother of God. For her he made his vigil of arms, and putting off the armour of Castilian knighthood, he clothed himself in the serge of a hermit, and went into seclusion at Montserrat. The mystical devotion of his life here did not satisfy his longings to be up and doing for the cause he had espoused. He made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and spent seven years as a student at the University of Paris. At the end of these seven years, he founded his order of the Company of Jesus, "an institution which has, more effectually than any other, exhibited the moral power of a united association in moving the great unorganised mass of mankind."<sup>9</sup>

It was especially as a barrier against the new heresy that this society was formed. Ignatius was in himself the very antithesis of Calvin and Luther. To the coldness and dryness of the one he opposed his burning ardour and his artistic and mystic imagination. To the personal tendencies and the vague aspirations towards liberty of the other, he offered in contrast an unreserved submission to the Church, and the complete abdication to a superior of all personal will. The Company of Jesus bore the impress of this twofold character on its literature, which, without producing any striking individuality, exercised by its learning and eloquence an immense collective influence.

It was on the Feast of the Assumption, 1533, in the Abbey-Church of Montmartre, that Loyola and his five companions founded that Society, which has sent out the most devoted soldiers of Rome.

**Contest of Religions.**—Germany had sounded the war-cry, France had systematised the attack, Spain had stood forth in defence of the ancient faith. From north

<sup>9</sup> Hallam, bk. i., pt. i., chap. vi.



and from south the tide of new ideas had rushed into France, and the genius of the nation was on the side of the old. For years this unhappy country was the arena on which rival creeds fought out their differences. As we have seen, the first welcome given in her to Protestantism was by men of letters and frequenters of the Court. To the former the new doctrines were a natural development of that freedom of thought which literature had set in motion; to the latter it was a fashion. The mother and the sister of Francis had looked upon it with a favourable eye, and Mlle. d'Heilly, the King's mistress, "*la plus belle des savantes, et la plus savante des belles*," had openly espoused the cause of the Reformers. The courtiers in their evening walks in the *Pré-aux-Clercs* sang the psalms of Marot; but the fashion passed away, and the Latin race of France returned to the old religion of her brethren of the South—not, however, till she had made that principle analagous to Protestantism, but older and more fruitful,—the right of freedom in thought and in discussion—her own for ever.

**L'Hôpital.**—After many bloody struggles and angry quarrels, France seemed to settle down into a sort of happy medium, a new state of things in which the first and most prominent figure was the Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital, of whom the libertine Brantome remarks that he was "the greatest and most worthy chancellor that France has ever had. A second Censor Cato, at least in appearance, with his long white beard, his pale face, and grave address." He professed at once Catholicism and toleration, and for a time influenced Catherine de Medici to labour for that peaceful co-existence of the two religions which was the effort of his life. Catherine, however, ambitious only of power, went over to the Catholics when their party seemed to have secured

ascendancy in southern Europe. War and persecution again reigned in France, and the dawn of that S. Bartholomew's Day broke, of which L'Hôpital said, that after its horrors he no longer wished to live.

L'Hôpital was the first political orator of note in France, and was a realisation of the ancient ideal, *Vir bonus dicendi peritus*. He stands at the head of that noble roll of French magistrates whose rigid virtues recalled the stern republicans of old; "great souls," as Montaigne says, "stamped with the die of antiquity." His eloquence was the natural effusion of the noble sentiments of his heart, "the sound which a grand soul gives out."

The second phase of the religious movement of the sixteenth century—the League—gave to France a school of orators, vehement, violent, blood-nurtured, though the Christian pulpit was their Rostra, and professors of the gospel their audience.

**The Preachers of the League.**—The fifteenth century had bequeathed to the pulpit a popular eloquence, fearless of the great and powerful over the people—a strange mixture of wit and zeal, suited to a coarse and bigoted age, the natural language of that democratic body within the Church, the Mendicant Friars. The sixteenth century inflamed it with the fury of political passions, when the vices of Henry III. and the heresy of his successor seemed for the time to confound in one religious interests and party rivalries.

The first serious symptoms of the League were manifested in 1576. Some imagine that the model on which it was formed was the Calvinistic devotion by oaths and formularies to the *cause*; others that the idea of a union of a great body of people under one absolute head was taken from the Jesuits. However the plan originated, it

was undoubtedly an association of the populace of Paris, never friendly to the Huguenots, in defence of their menaced faith. The odium which attached to the king, the ambition of its leader, the Duc de Guise, and the cabals of foreign potentates, soon made of it a formidable political party. When it took the field, victory followed upon victory and conquest upon conquest. At length the king placed himself at its head, and the Protestant Henry of Navarre could hardly collect an army of five thousand men. Whilst the soldiers of the League were winning town after town for the Catholic cause, the clergy of Paris were fighting her battles in another way. In the room of Jean Boucher, parish priest of Saint-Benoît, there assembled, to take counsel with each other, the Canon Launay, a convert from Protestantism; Prevôt, priest of Saint-Séverin; Rose, Bishop of Senlis, a renowned preacher; Pelletier, Guincestre, Hamilton, and Cueilly—all no less famous than he. These preachers were the soul of the League. Henri IV. exclaimed, "*Tout mon mal vient de la chaire*" (All my hurt comes from the pulpit.) In every church and chapel in Paris there were two sermons daily. Their burning eloquence encouraged the people to suffer and endure—to brave even death itself. When Henri III. had assassinated the Guises, the churches rang with cries of vengeance. The preachers commented upon political events, attacked individuals, discussed the interests of the State. They protested they could not preach the gospel "because it was too common, and every one knew it." They preferred relating "the life, acts, and abominable doings of that perfidious tyrant Henry of Valois." The sermon was to the Parisians both club and newspaper, and had all the demagogic violence of the most sanguinary times. Boucher, in a Lenten course at St Germain l'Auxerrois, insisted that "the

time had come to put hand to the sickle, and to exterminate the Parliament and others." He said so much about blood and slaughter that a counsellor in the congregation tried to escape from the listening crowd, for fear the preacher "should come down from his pulpit, seize some political character by the collar, and devour him alive." Rose talked of "a blood-letting of S. Bartholomew," and "a throat-cutting to arrest the progress of the disease." Commolet maintained that "the death of political persons was the life of Catholics;" Aubry, "that he would march foremost to strangle them;" Cueilly protested "that he wished every one who laughed might be seized;" and Guincestre, that "all askers of news should be thrown into the water." The tone of these orators was worthy of their politics. L'Étoile compared them to an enraged fishwife. Yet if eloquence is the power of moving souls, they were assuredly often eloquent. When Guincestre preached at S. Barthélemy after the assassination of the Lorraine princes, he exacted from his hearers a vow that they would spend the last sou in their purse, and shed the last drop of their blood to avenge the martyrs. "Lift up your hand, Mr President," he exclaimed to the President de Harlay, who was sitting in front of the pulpit, "lift up your hand so that every one may see you,"—and the President was constrained to obey, or the people, excited by the demagogic harangue, would infallibly have torn him to pieces.

But it was in defeat and in reverses that the power of the pulpit was most felt. A prisoner on parole brought to the *Sixteen* the tidings of the defeat of Ivry. The monk Christin was charged to communicate them to the people of Paris. He chose for his text the words, "Who-soever I love I chasten." He began his sermon by telling them that, being the loved people of God, they must

expect some severe sign of his predilection. At this point of his sermon a courier entered the church, and delivered a letter to the monk. Christin opened it, and then rising in the pulpit, the outspread letter in his hand, he declared to the people that God had that day made him a prophet, and he told the story of the Battle of Ivry. Then, with all the power of his eloquence, he broke out into pathetic entreaties and moving prayers, till the people that had been listening in sadness and silence passed from terror to enthusiasm, and felt ready to suffer anything and everything for the holy League. In the siege of Paris it was the preachers who sustained the courage of the people, earning the eulogy Pliny had bestowed on the Roman orator, *Te dicente alimenta sua abdicaverunt tribus*.

Their eloquence, though so great a power, hardly belongs to the domain of literature. Popular language and coarse invective are often a means of success with an unpolished people. Sometimes these orators of the League struck a spark of real wit. This is Boucher's account of the military pomp of Henry's conversion :—"What ashes ! what sackcloth ! what fasts ! what tears ! what sighs ! what bare feet ! what strikings on the breast ! what down-cast face ! what lowliness of prayer ! what prostrations on the ground in sign of penitence ! Armed soldiers, fifes, beating of drums, volleys of artillery and musketry, trumpets and clarions, a great suite of nobles, gorgeously attired ladies, the delicacy of the penitent leaning on the neck of a favourite because of the great distance he had to go—about fifty paces—from the door of the abbey to the door of the church ; the joke that he cracked, looking up to the fool at the window : Don't you wish you were here ?—the dais, the support, the cushions, the carpets strewn with *fleurs de lis*, the adoration paid by the pre-

lates to him who should have bowed in humiliation before them :—these are the signs of his penitence.”

Labitte, in his curious and interesting work on the *DÉMOCRATIE CHEZ LES PRÉDICATEURS DE LA LIGUE*, thus describes this chief of Parisian Leaguers :—“ His style is a style of transition. His sentences are long, learned, periodical, incisive, whimsical, never shrinking from frank utterance, and often catching a certain picturesqueness of expression, according to the manner of the sixteenth century ; but likewise they are already full of pretentious metaphors, and aim at *bel esprit*, as the homilies of Godeau, or the days of the Hotel de Rambouillet. Boucher proceeds voluntarily by enumerations and apostrophes. His mingled quotations from profane history and the Bible, the incoherent succession of anecdotes, witticisms, and solemn periods, and, if one may use the word, the perpetual clanking of the orator’s learning, were not without their charm in an epoch of confusion which had not the faintest presentiment of that sober and severe taste of which the writers of Louis XIV. were to find the secret.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PAMPHLETS—MEMOIRS—HISTORY.

**Pamphlets.**—The preachers of the Leaguers had only made use, more or less happily, of the ancient processes of eloquence. The sixteenth century raised for oratorical passions a tribune unknown to antiquity,—one whose sound went out to the uttermost parts of the land. It created the pamphlet, which partook of the nature of the sermon and the book, and was the voice of the moment, the idea of each day. Born in the very birth-hour of the event it described, it was as the improvisation of the press. Scattered broadcast among the people, it penetrated into far corners where the orator's voice could not reach, and made of a great country one vast forum. The pamphlet is the real mouthpiece of modern nations, and their newspaper, which, though it lacks the great power given by the daily repetition of particular doctrines, has yet the advantage of escaping the monotony inseparable from daily publications. It wins more listeners, inasmuch as it comes more rarely and quite unexpectedly, and never but when it has really something to say. Naturally, such works can be but little literary in their shape, being records of facts rather than compositions; but yet it is to them that we must go to learn about party-passions, and the sources of facts, and the innermost thoughts of men. In them we see, instantaneously

photographed by the new light which has just broken, the life-like physiognomy of rival factions. First, there is Protestantism, grave and superior in thought and style—especially at the outset of the strife—giving to these light publications something of the heavy austerity of a dissertation. Henri Estienne is in the van with his *APOLOGIE D'HÉRODOTE*. François Hottoman follows with his *FRANCO-GALLIA*; and Hubert Languet, the friend of Philip Sidney, with his *VINDICLÆ CONTRA TYRANNOS*, “breathing the stern spirit of Judaical Huguenotism.” The style and language of these is learned, like the writings of Bodin and La Boétie. But as time goes on, and pamphlets come thick and fast, they abandon this somewhat heavy erudition for a rough and energetic eloquence, and read like the utterances of a Calvinistic Nemesis, each line of which is written with the sword's point dipped in the blood of martyrs. Their very titles smack of violence:—*Épître au Tigre de la France* (the Cardinal de Lorraine); *La France—Turquie*; *Discours Merveilleux de la Vie, Actions, et Déportements de la Reine Catherine de Médicis*; *Apophthegmes, ou Discours Notables Recueillis de Divers Auteurs contre la Tyrannie et les Tyrans*; *Réveil-Matin des Français et de leurs Voisins*; *Discours des Jugements de Dieu contre les Tyrans*; *Le Politique, Dialogue traitant de la Puissance, Autorité, et Devoir des Princes, des Divers Gouvernements, jusques où l'on doit supporter la Tyrannie,—si en une oppression extrême il est loisible aux sujets de prendre les armes pour défendre leur vie et leur liberté,—quand, comment, par qui et par quel moyen cela se peut faire*. These Protestant pamphlets are not wholly democratic,—they present a curious combination of aristocratic ideas and popular sentiments. Calvinism tried for a time to unite demagogic passions with the feudal spirit, just as Catholicism tried to unite them



with the sacerdotal. Aristocracy was the real end, democracy the pretext.<sup>1</sup>

The Catholic party snatched the popular standard from the hands of its enemies, and defended it with even greater fury. The principle of the League was democracy under the guardianship of the Church. The most violent and most devoted members of the Union desired, according to the expression of Palma Cayet, to reduce the French State to a republic in submission to the Pope. But this idea was mixed up with numberless foreign elements. The pamphlets of the Leaguers were influenced in turn by Spain, Lorraine, and Parma: opposing interests met in them, clashed one against the other, and reduced each other to impotence. They were animated by but few ideas, but by many passions. Some make unblushing apologies for the Massacre of S. Bartholomew. Their very titles strike one with horror, and they seem to be written by drunken butchers in characters of filth and blood.<sup>2</sup>

After a time some of the great preachers appear as pamphleteers—Boucher, Launay, Rose, Guénébrard. The former published a long treatise in Latin on the JUST ABDICATION OF HENRI III., and one in a more popular form in French on the VIE ET FAITS NOTABLES DE HENRI DE VALOIS, TOUT AU LONG, SANS EN RIEN REQUÉRIR, OU SONT CONTENUES LES TRAHISONS, PERFIDIES, SACRILÈGES, EXACTIIONS, CRUAUTÉS ET HONTES DE CET HYPOCRITE ET APOSTAT. These are the words in which he defends the assassination of the king:—"At the moment we are writing, whilst the pulpit, public councils, and army organisation take up our time and break upon our meditations, news at once admir-

<sup>1</sup> Most of these pamphlets can be found in vols. ii. and iii. of the MÉMOIRES DE L'ÉTAT DE FRANCE SOUS CHARLES IX.

<sup>2</sup> The greater part of these are to be found in the collections of L'ÉTOILE, vol. no. 2, in the MSS. of the National Library of Paris.

able and terrible is proclaimed. A young man, a second Ehud more courageous than Ehud, and veritably inspired by Christ and a sovereign charity, has renewed the work of Judith on Holofernes, the work of David on Goliath. Doubtless Jacques Clément has but put into practice a general doctrine; but his courage, his gloriously-accomplished design, which he had revealed beforehand to some, all that deserves our gratitude, and has shed joy abroad, —a holy joy,—in the hearts of all good people. Glory be to God! Peace has been given back to our Church and country by the death of this ferocious beast. *Clément* has made him expiate his false *clemency*."

Charles Labitte says that "this book of Boucher's is a very picture of his time: a compound of coarse buffoonery, ridiculous quibbles, scholastic subtleties, school violences, street declamations, legal quirks, half-digested Biblical learning, profane pedantry, passionate hatreds, effete notions of a papal theocracy, and a rough presentiment of revolutionary doctrines. And in the midst of all that, between an absurd fable and a syllogism, between an impudent calumny and a legal maxim, we came upon serious ideas, a passion sometimes eloquent, a close logic, an incontestable polemical talent. The progress is rapid, the reasoning close, the chapters short, the whole skilful and striking. The entire sixteenth century is contained in it, and the book of Boucher is a date."

The most eloquent and incendiary pamphlet that issued from the press of the League was edited by Louis d'Orléans, and bore the title, *AVERTISSEMENT D'UN CATHOLIQUE ANGLAIS AUX CATHOLIQUES FRANÇAIS*. The author tries to convince his readers of the danger they would run of losing their religion, and of "experiencing, as in England, the cruelty of ministers," if they consented to receive a heretic monarch in the person of Henry of Navarre.

He replies by shouts of death to the conciliatory words of the Béarnais, and praises the "very salutary blood-letting of the S. Bartholomew." Invoking, in energetic language, the vision of the people in insurrection against a king cursed of Rome, he exclaims:—"Then the people would dash in their fury, and like a foaming sea swallow up the master, and the crew, and the ship together. We are accused of being Spaniards. Yes! rather than have a Huguenot prince, we would go and seek not only a Spaniard, but a Tartar, a Muscovite, a Scythian who was a Catholic."

The spirit of the ultra-Catholic party breathes in this work of one of the *Sixteen*. Its success was immense, and lasted for many years.

In the meantime, between these two extreme factions was silently growing a moderate party, foreshadowed by the Chancellor de l'Hôpital. This party—the *Politiques*—had likewise its pamphlets, incontestably the best of all. Dating from them, the wit of French literature was displayed on the side of good sense. The Protestants, austere and energetic, had often written eloquent treatises; the Leaguers, coarse and violent, had made impassioned declamations; the *Politiques*, wise and witty, attained in their pamphlets to true satire.

Henri IV. was at the head of the writers, as of the soldiers, of his party. Du Plessis-Mornay placed his pen as well as his sword at the king's service, and edited most of his manifestoes, in which the Béarnais spirit of freedom and toleration shines out through the Calvinistic stiffness of Du Plessis. The letters of Henri IV. to Henri III. and to the Sorbonne, written by his minister, are masterpieces of skill. His private letters in his own hand are perhaps more remarkable. His political and military letters are worthy of a Cæsar. His letters to his mistresses are brimful of grace, feeling, and delicacy.

He left polemics to his partisans. Pierre l'Étoile, compiler of many valuable records of this time, drew up for him the energetic placard which was posted in Rome on the statues of Pasquin and Marforio, on the principal churches, and even on the door of the Vatican itself. "As to the crime of heresy, the king protests and maintains that Mr Sixtus, who calls himself Pope (saving his Holiness), has falsely and maliciously lied." This is in the style of the pamphleteers; but generally reserve and good sense characterise the *Politique* writers.

In the first rank of these was Michael Hurault, Sieur du Fay, a grandson of the Chancellor de l'Hôpital, editor of the ANTI-ESPAGNOL; the Duc de Nevers, who on his secession after the battle of Ivry from the ranks of the Leaguers, wrote and dedicated to Henry one of the best literary productions of the age, a TRAITÉ DE LA PRISE D'ARMES; and the historian, Régnier de la Planche, of whose dialogue, entitled LE LIVRE DES MARCHANDS, Buchon says he knows "nothing before or since the LETTRES PROVINCIALES, more vigorously written and thought out."

**Satire Ménippée.**—A more famous and influential work of the time, however, was the SATIRE MÉNIPPÉE, in ridicule of the then defunct League (1594). Putting out of sight the original idea which animated it—the preservation of religious unity—at the end of an epoch when such unity had formed the only tie which bound men together, it attacked and ridiculed the vices, the littlenesses, the selfish interests of the Leaguers, and was the severest blow aimed by the new political spirit at the spirit of the Middle Ages, which it distorted and could not appreciate. The personal character of the authors of the pamphlet was singularly adapted to their part in it. They belonged to that educated, pacifically-inclined middle-class, which

had neither the ignorance of the people nor the hereditary traditions of the nobility. They were seven worthy citizens, friendly to peace, because peace meant comfort and competence, devoted to royalty and their own ease, and violently opposed to the League because it was seditious and not money-making; unable to forgive Mayenne the long fasts the siege of Paris had forced upon them, and "the guard and sentry-duty on which they had lost half their time, and caught cold and illnesses which had ruined their health."<sup>3</sup>

The language of this satire is perhaps more elevated than that of any other work of the sixteenth century; form and thought are more on an equality; we feel that we are drawing near to a new period in the history of literature.

**Memoirs.**—Another point which marks the immaturity of this century is the number of *Memoirs* it produced. From the death of Francis I. to the submission of Paris, *i.e.*, from 1547 to 1594, no less than twenty-six works of this kind appeared, whilst the whole century produced but one historian.

The long series opens with the memoirs of the CHEVALIER SANS PEUR ET SANS REPROCHE, by an anonymous author. To these succeed those of Fleurange, called the JEUNE ADVENTUREUX, son of the Wild Boar of the Ardennes, and playmate of Francis I. They were written during his captivity in the citadel of Sluys, and, notwithstanding their manifest exaggerations, are full of interest and originality.

In the same fortress Coligny wrote his DISCOURS SUR LE SIÈGE DE S. QUENTIN. Another Protestant, Régnier

<sup>3</sup> The seven were Gillot, at whose house they met, Normand Leroy, chaplain of the Connétable de Bourbon, Pithou, Rapin, Passerat, Durand, and Chrestien.

de la Planche, contributed to the list his *ÉTAT DE LA FRANCE SOUS FRANÇOIS II.*, and the poet D'Aubigné his *HISTOIRE UNIVERSELLE* and his *MÉMOIRES*. The courtier Brantôme, the President Jeannin, the brothers Du Bellay, and many others, swelled the number. Every evening L'Estoile dotted down notes of all he had heard or seen during the day, and mixed up with the historical records of his time the little daily details of his own *ménage*. The most *spirituelle* and observant of all the memoir writers, was Marguerite de Valois, first wife of Henri IV. Speaking of her work, Baron remarks, "The *I* predominates everywhere; but like all egotists of mind and genius, she interests us in this *I*, and makes us fond of it. Then, as regards style, her memoirs are perhaps superior to all of her time. . . . The soul, the mind, the character of the woman pierce through on every page. Learned as people were then, but without the pedantry which spoilt knowledge, open and sympathetic in sentiment, clear and unembarrassed in construction, precise and delicate in expression, she forms the transition between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, between Christine of Pisa and Madame de Sévigné." <sup>4</sup>

**De Thou.**—The one historian of the sixteenth century was Jacques Auguste de Thou,<sup>5</sup> a president himself, and the son and brother-in-law of presidents. He employed fifteen years in collecting his materials: visiting battle-fields; searching through archives, libraries, and state papers; possessing himself of every printed history he could find, and causing copies for himself to be made of those in manuscript; consulting the most important political personages of Europe.

Impartiality, intellect, love of mankind, all seemed to

<sup>4</sup> *HISTOIRE ABREGÉE DE LA LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISE*, vol. ii. p. 200.

<sup>5</sup> Called, in the style of the day, Thuanus.

combine to make of the history of De Thou one of those standard works which are copied and abridged, but never re-made; but, like every other literary work of its age, its style is deficient in regularity and elegance, and the Latin language in which it is written, besides hindering its popularity, gives it, even in the judgment of scholars, a certain stiffness and constraint.

## CHAPTER IX.

### POETRY AND REFORM OF LITERATURE.

**Marot.**—The first French poet of the sixteenth century was Clément Marot. He united in himself, under a purer form, all the qualities of the old poetry,—the colour of Villon, the gracefulness of Froissart, the delicacy of Charles d'Orléans, the good sense of Alain Chartier, and the animation of Jehan de Meung,—as if the poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, about to die in the new light of the Renaissance, had gathered together all its riches to endow this fortunate heir of the troubadours. Fate, too, placed him, as a page to the king's sister, at the gay court of Francis I., and the young monarch of nineteen graciously encouraged the young poet of twenty, and Marot, though his Psalms, so popular at the time of their production, possess little merit, stands higher than any versifier of his day. His first compositions were some of the insipid moral allegories then in vogue; but it is on his epistles, allegories, and epigrams that his fame rests. The chief excellence of his style, which was the chosen model of La Fontaine, is his humorous *naïveté*. His chief imitator, the Abbé de Saint-Gelais, never equalled him.

His royal mistress, Margaret, wife of Henri d'Albret, king of Navarre, was herself the authoress of a book



entitled the *HEPTAMERON*,—a collection of those *novels*, successors to the *fabliaux* of the trouvères, which the *DECAMERON* of Boccaccio had made fashionable.

These *novels* seem to have originated in the stories which at that time in court and château wiled away the long evenings. The *CENT NOUVELLES NOUVELLES*, variously ascribed to Louis XI. and the Duke of Burgundy, appear to be a collection of tales written by the seigneurs of their court.

Bonaventure Despériers, in his *NOUVELLES RÉCRÉATIONS ET JOYEUX DEVIS*, excelled in style almost all the writers of the century; but the novel had no other design than to amuse, and was a complete stranger to the thought, labours, and intellectual life of its day.

**Ronsard.**—In the middle of the sixteenth century arose the *Pleiad*, who, under the headship of Pierre de Ronsard, strove to effect that change in the character of French poetry which the general revolution in literature, consequent on the impetus given by Francis I. to philological learning, seemed to render necessary.

This Ronsard, a nobleman of Vendôme, had been page to the Duke of Orleans, but a premature deafness had obliged him to leave the Court. He retired to a college of which the learned Daurat had just been named principal. Here, in the society of his friends—Jodelle, Baif, Du Bellay, De Thiard, Jamyn, and Belleau (who with himself formed the *Pleiad*<sup>1</sup>)—he conceived the design of improving his mother tongue by infusing into it some of the majesty of thought and expression found in classical authors. Du Bellay published the manifesto of the new school (1549), *DÉFENSE ET ILLUSTRATION DE LA LANGUE FRANÇAISE*, in which he boldly announced his intention of displacing the

<sup>1</sup> Hallam makes Daurat, and not Jamyn, the seventh member of the *Pleiad*, vol. ii. p. 212.

prevailing style of French literature, to set up in its stead the style of the ancients. The two essential points of the projected reform were the ennobling the language by an infusion of words and metaphors borrowed from antiquity, and the ennobling poetry by the introduction of the different kinds in vogue in Greece and Rome. This was the programme. Ronsard then set himself to invent a language for poetry. He borrowed whole words from the Latin and fitted on to them a French termination, or he made one word of two in imitation of the Greek,—converted verbs into substantives, and substantives into verbs,<sup>2</sup>—ransacked the various *patois* of his native land (which in his classical preoccupation he imagined dialects) for new words,—and, possessed with the idea that the nobility of a language springs from the nobility of idea, he borrowed words from every profession, and even, his biographer assures us, “went to the workshops of artisans to practise every kind of trade, that he might thus learn the terms peculiar to them.” But in vain: a language cannot be created in a day, and the pedantry of Ronsard almost provokes our smiles, while within half a century of his death, Malherbe, in forming a new school of poetry, made use, not of the barbarous compound of Ronsard, but of the popular language of Marot.

Ronsard, however, quite understood that to consolidate his revolution an immortal work was necessary, and this he laboured to produce. He introduced into France all the forms of ancient poetry, putting the ode and the epic in the foremost place. But he failed in his works as in his linguistical innovations, and his odes are like those armed panoplies of our museums,—helmet, breastplate, greaves, shield, all is there but the living thing to move

<sup>2</sup> This he called *provignement*. From *verve* he made *verver*, *vervement*; from *pays*, *payser*, &c.

and animate them. His popularity in his own day, however, was immense. He was called Homer and Virgil; kings and princes emulated each other in doing him honour; Charles IX. addressed some elegant lines to him;<sup>3</sup> Mary Stuart in captivity sought for solace in his verse; the learned men of the day looked upon him as the miracle of the age; Montaigne unhesitatingly declared that with him French poetry had reached perfection, and that he was equal to the ancients; even Tasso, in 1571, thought himself fortunate in having gained from him some words of approbation for the first cantos of the GERUSALEMME; pupils flocked to him; and "at his death, in 1586, a funeral service was performed in Paris with the best music that the king could command; it was attended by the Cardinal de Bourbon and an immense concourse; eulogies in prose and verse were recited in the university; and in those anxious moments, when the crown of France was almost in its agony, there was leisure to lament that Ronsard had been withdrawn."<sup>4</sup>

Another member of the Pleiad, Antoine de Baïf, attempted to introduce Latin hexameters into French

<sup>3</sup> The following are the lines attributed to Charles IX.:—

*L'art de faire des vers, dût-on s'en indigner,  
Doit être à plus haut prix que celui de régner.  
Tous deux également nous portons la couronne:  
Mais roi, je la reçus, poëte, tu la donne.  
Ton esprit enflammé d'une cëleste ardeur  
Éclate par soi-même, et moi par ma grandeur.  
Si du côté des dieux je cherche l'avantage,  
Ronsard est leur ami, si je suis leur image.  
Ta lyre, qui ravit par de si doux accords,  
Te soumet les esprits dont je n'ai que les corps.  
Elle l'en rend le maître et te sait introduire  
Où le plus fier tyran n'a jamais eu d'empire.  
Elle amollit les cœurs et soumet la beauté.  
Je puis donner la mort; toi, l'immortalité!*

<sup>4</sup> Hallam, HIST. OF LITERATURE, vol. ii. ch. v.

poetry; but even in the full sunshine of the Renaissance, this exotic could not take root.<sup>5</sup>

**Jodelle.**—Jodelle tried to resuscitate the drama of the ancients, and though his plays do not possess much intrinsic merit, they mark a date in the history of French literature. In 1511 a dramatic piece, *LE PRINCE DES SOTS ET LA MÈRE SOTTE*, by one Pierre Gringore, had been performed in Paris. Its chief aim was to hold the Pope and his court up to ridicule. In 1548, the Mysteries, for nearly two centuries the delight of the Parisian people, were suddenly forbidden by the Parliament as “indecent and profane.” Several translations from the Greek and Latin theatre had been made in French. In 1552 Jodelle attempted to imitate, not to translate, antiquity. In that year his tragedy of *CLÉOPATRE*, and his comedy of *LA RENCONTRE*, were performed before Henri II., “with the great applause of all the company, and again at the College of Boncour, when all the windows were crowded with persons of distinction, and the court was so full of scholars that the entrances to the colleges were stopped. . . . Rémi Belleau and Jean de la Péruse played the principal parts.”<sup>6</sup> Jodelle himself took the part of Cleopatra.

Robert Garnier, the writer of eight tragedies, of which *LES JUIVES* is the best and most original, followed in the steps of Jodelle, and they, and not Corneille and Racine, are the real fathers of French tragedy.

In comedy, Jean de la Taille in his *CORRIVAUX*, imitated in turn Ariosto, Machiavelli, and Bibbiena.

<sup>5</sup> This is an example of the *vers bairin*:—

*Phosphore, redde diem: cur gaudia nostra moraris?*

*Cesare venturo, Phosphore, redde diem.*

*Aube, rebaille le jour: pourquoi notre aïse retiens-tu?*

*César va revenir: Aube, rebaille le jour.*

<sup>6</sup> Pasquier, an eye-witness.


Larivey is the best comic writer of this early date. His six comedies, *LE LAQUAIS*, *LA VEUVE*, *LES ESPRITS*, *LE MORFONDU*, *LES JALOUX*, *LES ÉCOLIERS*, borrowed from Plautus and Terence, make, like the tragedies of Jodelle, an epoch in the history of the French drama.<sup>7</sup>

The disciples of Ronsard in Paris, understanding what had been the real success of their master, confined themselves to light and tender poetry, and Amadis Jamyn almost rivalled him. It was not thus in the provinces. Dubartas, in his poem on the creation of the world, called *LA SEMAINE*, exaggerated the pedantic affectation of the chief star of the Pleiad, notwithstanding—or we might say in spite of—which, he possessed the noble ideas and fervent enthusiasm of a true poet. His work went through thirty editions in ten years, and some have maintained, with some appearance of probability, that it was a field in which Milton gleaned. Agrippa d'Aubigné, the author of a *UNIVERSAL HISTORY*, *MÉMOIRS*, and many *PAMPHLETS*, was a more distinguished poet than Dubartas. A bigoted Protestant, he drew from his religious convictions and his hatred of a persecuting Catholicism, that burning inspiration which was almost always wanting to the poets of the sixteenth century. His *TRAGIQUES*, a religious and political satire, are an incoherent mixture of Greek mythology, moral allegory, and theology, but they are full of masculine beauties, and in many places flash with a noble indignation. "The Hebrew spirit breathes in it," says Sainte Beuve, and there is in it surely some foreshadowing of the great century which was to come; the union of form and idea is almost accomplished. In point of fact, D'Aubigné lived on

<sup>7</sup> By birth an Italian, whose real name was Giunti, of which Larivey (*l'arrivé*), is a translation.

into the seventeenth century, but his language never belonged to it, but was always the rugged, obscure, unequal, powerful, and energetic tongue of the early days of Ronsard.

"Pibrac, a magistrate of great integrity, obtained an extraordinary reputation by his QUATRAINS, a series of moral tetrastichs in the style of Theognis. . . . They were continually republished in the seventeenth century, and translated into many European and even Oriental languages." <sup>8</sup>

The most graceful of all these poets was Desportes, who confined himself to sonnets, and discarding the pedantry of the Pleiad, wrote verses as remarkable for their tenderness as for the genius they evinced. Hallam says of the French poetry of this period, that "it deviates less from a certain standard than any other. It is not often low, as may be imputed to the earlier writers, because a peculiar style, removed from common speech, and supposed to be classical, was a condition of satisfying the critics; it is not often obscure, at least in syntax, as the Italian sonnet is apt to be, because the genius of the language and the habits of society demanded perspicuity. But it seldom delights us by a natural sentiment or unaffected grace of diction, because both one and the other were fettered by conventional rules. The monotony of amorous song is more wearisome, if that be possible, than among the Italians." <sup>9</sup> 

**Malherbe.**—It was left to Malherbe to accomplish a real reform in poetry. The Pleiad had made a violent effort, and in so doing had overshot their mark. Malherbe, contemptuously determining to avoid the affectations of Ronsard, was yet the first to realise his dream to give

<sup>8</sup> Hallam, *HIST. OF LITERATURE*, vol. ii. p. 215.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 216.

to French poetry a polish and grace hitherto unknown to it.<sup>1</sup>

François de Malherbe was born at Caen in 1555. He served under Henri IV., and finally settled at Paris, where he died in 1628. In his lifetime he acquired an immense reputation, and posterity cannot but accord to him the praise of having created a language out of the rude and confused materials left to him by his predecessors. With too much conventionalism, and too little sentiment to merit a foremost place in the roll of poets, he yet had the taste to choose well, and some few of his lines possess real beauty. The *cultus* of language was his religion. On his very deathbed he preached it to his nurse. He was proud of being called the tyrant of words and syllables. He banished from his language both pedantry and colloquialism. Choosing this word and rejecting that, he may be said to have created modern French, and we read his verses to-day as though they had been written but yesterday. Correct and laborious, he was not a voluminous writer,—a fact which does not surprise us, when we hear that so great was his devotion to purity and regularity of style, that he would often spoil half a ream of paper in writing and re-writing a single stanza.

Contemporaneously with Malherbe lived Mathurin Régnier (1573–1613), whose satires, highly extolled by Boileau, have by some been preferred to those of his panegyrist himself. Régnier—the nephew of Desportes—who had attempted to defend the Pleiad, effected by natural genius and instinct that which Malherbe accomplished by laborious selection and rigid rule. His poetry has no philosophical depth. He was an artist rather than

<sup>1</sup> *Enfin Malherbe vint, et, le premier en France,  
Fit sentir dans les vers une juste cadence,  
D'un mot mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir,  
Et réduisait la muse aux règles du devoir.*—BOILEAU.

a moralist. He paints pictures, rather than reads lessons. Always simple and natural, he, all unwittingly, helped Malherbe in his self-set task of creating a language for France. "Régnier," says Sainte-Beuve,<sup>2</sup> "is in fact the Montaigne of our poetry. He also, without appearing to think about it, has created a language of his own, all sense and genius, which, without fixed rule or learned evocation, springs from the ground at every step of thought, and stands upright, sustained by the single breath which animates it. The movements of this inspired language have nothing solemn or studied; in their natural irregularity and effective roughness, they are like the sudden exclamations and quick gestures of frank, impassioned warming as he speaks. The figures in his pieces sparkle with colours bright rather than choice, strikingly rather than delicately shaded. They push and oust one another. The author paints at all times, and sometimes, for lack of better material, paints with mud and refuse. Often happily trivial, he borrows from the people their proverbs, and turns them into poetry, and gives them back in exchange his own proverbial lines, in which, as in good medals, the impress of the striker is recognisable after the lapse of two centuries."

Both Régnier and Malherbe wrote and lived in the early days of the seventeenth century, and when we have read the history of that period, we shall the better appreciate the effect they had on French literature. Racan and Maynard carried on the tradition, and it is unquestionably true that in a certain sense it is to Malherbe and Régnier that France owes Corneille, Racine, Boileau, and the other great poets which adorn the "*grand siècle*."

<sup>2</sup> TABLEAU DE LA POÉSIE FRANÇAISE, vol. i. p. 160.



## THIRD PERIOD.

### **The Seventeenth Century.**

#### *CHAPTER X.*

#### FOREIGN INFLUENCE.—NOVELISTS.

**Influence of Spain.**—The political power of Spain in France had received its deathblow from Henry IV., but the influence of that country over French literature is a remarkable feature of the first half of the seventeenth century. The days indeed were past in which the real Presidents of the États-Généraux were the ambassadors of the Catholic king; but the ascendancy of their tongue was still maintained, and Henry IV., the most popular and the most French of French kings, found himself compelled in his old age to take lessons in Spanish from Antonio Perez, the disgraced Secretary of State of Charles V. and Philip II. His people required it of him, and to satisfy them, he not only laboured to acquire the language of his enemy, but, bowing to the might of public opinion, he assumed the dark garb of the Castilian king. In vain had he driven Philip and his hosts beyond the Pyrenees. The ambition of his own subjects was to resemble them as closely as possible. Pointed beards, felt sombreros, Spanish oaths, were the distinctive marks of good society

in Paris,—an outward indication of the more important influence on thought and feeling.

Perez, when he escaped from the dungeons of the Inquisition, fled to France, where he was received by Henry with open arms. It was in Paris that appeared the first edition of his *RELACIONES*, which served as antecedents and models to the illustrious letter-writers of that time. The celebrity which they acquired explains the host of imitators they found. At the Court of the Escorial, Perez had been a distinguished and devoted adherent of the school of the "*Cultoristas*,"<sup>1</sup> at that time the rivals in Spain of the "*Conceptistas*."<sup>2</sup> "The correspondence of Perez," says De Puibusque, "bears the impress of his habits; the statesman is lost in the man of the world; but the man of the world is still the courtier,—the courtier with a hundred masters to flatter instead of one, . . . he coaxes, he fawns, he flatters with shameless emphasis.

"Who before him would have dreamt of translating into mystic hyperbole the formula of civility? Who would have thought of calling himself 'the very humble servant of a divinity,' or of 'passionately saluting an angel?' . . . Oriental pomp, Castilian gravity, Italian affectation, nothing conceals this character of a favourite, which is always collected in its carelessness, insinuating in its giddiness, obsequious in its familiarity."

Perez was the real originator of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. The first letters he wrote in France were addressed to the Marquis of Pisani, the father of Catherine, Marquise de Rambouillet. Here is a specimen of their style:—

<sup>1</sup> The school of Gongora, who, imitating the Italian Marino, introduced into Spanish literature the extravagant *estilo culto*.

<sup>2</sup> So called from the Italian *concettisti*.

"If your excellency has remarked the care I take of my teeth, pray let him not imagine, I beg, that I do so for any other purpose but the fear I have of my tongue, for I believe that nature has surrounded it with teeth that it may have some object it is in awe of, to keep it within bounds, and prevent it rushing on too madly. In truth, it were better that it should be bitten, or even cut out, than that it should speak inopportunately. Perhaps so eminent a statesman and, general as your Excellency will prefer to think that this arrangement aims at showing us that words should produce results, and action follow counsel, just as action should always be accompanied by counsel, if everything is not to be left to chance."

Perez likewise visited England, and at the Court of Elizabeth found himself in his true element. The style of conversation introduced by Lilly, and called Euphuism, was then in vogue. It was a tissue of extravagant metaphors and preposterous hyperbole, which Perez did not hesitate to transport in triumph to France. The following letter to Essex will serve as a sample of the style :—

"My lord, a thousand times my lord, do you not know what causes eclipses of the moon and of the sun? The first is the result of the interposition of the earth between the sun and the moon; the second, of the moon between the sun and the earth. If between the moon, that is, my changing and ever declining career, and you who are my only sun, absence is interposed (for absence is the interposition of the earth between severed friends); or if, between the earth,—that is my poor body,—and your noble favour, my career is interposed,—or rather opposed,—will not my soul be in sadness, in darkness itself?"

If a statesman who, besides being occupied with important negotiations, was in daily danger of his life

from the vengeance of his irritated king, could clothe his thoughts in such puerilities of ornamentation, what could not others do, who had no interest or occupation beyond that of making their own wit and fancy famous, and exaggerating that of others?

The Spanish Gongora and the English Lilly only sent disciples to France. The Italian Marino came himself *in propria persona*. He was summoned by Concini, as the representative of the literary glory of Italy, to the Court of Mary of Medici. He came with a great reputation, and, to the great disgust of the graceful and refined Malherbe, was loaded with favours. It would be almost impossible to conceive anything more far-fetched and extravagant than his *CONCERTI*. Thus we see that bad taste and a vitiated style poured in upon France from three different quarters. How could her literature not suffer?

**Hôtel de Rambouillet.**—The point where these three streams met was the Hôtel de Rambouillet. This famous society did not, as has been often said, create bad taste; it simply bore with it as inevitable. In return, it purified the language, refined manners and feelings, was public opinion to the press till a real public opinion was formed, constituted itself the nursing-mother of literary spirit till literary spirit could walk by itself, and, in the words of La Bruyère, had grown to resemble those children who, strong and sturdy from the milk they have sucked, beat their nurses.

After the great civil wars of the sixteenth century, the upper classes of society felt the need of an opportunity of meeting together to enjoy that intercourse of mind with mind which characterises the French nation. Hitherto there had been controversies, sermons, speeches; now men began to converse. The first circle in which a brilliant,

lively, and witty conversation satisfied this new-found want was that which assembled at the hotel of the Marquis de Pisani, Jean de Vivonne, one of the correspondents of Antonio Perez. Situated close to the Louvre, it was like a second court, not less brilliant than that of Marie de Medici,—the palace of mind beside the palace of power. Three women reigned there in succession, for to women must always belong the education of an age of propriety and good taste. Julia Savelli, the wife of Jean de Vivonne, was a noble and distinguished Italian, who came to Paris, and, like a second Armida, forced the fierce brothers-in-arms of the *Béarnais* to put their rough languages aside with their spurs. Her daughter Catherine, Marquise de Rambouillet, had all the sparkling charm of Tuscan society, without its licence. The austerity of her principles had even made her withdraw from the Court of Henry IV., but she delighted in admiration, and under the romantic name of Arthénice (an anagram of Catherine), she favoured the introduction of the innocent gallantry Italian poets had made fashionable. It was for her that Marino reserved his tenderest compliments, his most flowery madrigals; she was the object of the mystic devotion of the aged Malherbe, when, on his deathbed, he sang in a broken voice,

*“Je suis à Rhodante,  
Je veux mourir sien.”*

Her daughter, Julie d'Angennes, succeeded to her throne by right of wit and beauty, as much as by right of birth. Her reign extended from the death of Malherbe in 1629 to that of Voiture in 1648, and was the most brilliant period of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Condé, Conti, La Rochefoucauld, Bussy, De Grammont, were in her train. The noble and honest Montausier, the original of Molière's MISANTHROPE, more fortunate than his reproduc-

tion, ALCESTE, allowed himself to be humanised by this sweet and charming *Célimène*. It is true that, as Marot says, he was a long time in doing it, for it was not till after fourteen years of constancy and sighing that he succeeded in persuading Julie d'Angennes to accept him. In the meantime, every one burnt incense to her as to a divinity; all who attempted writing or versifying religiously brought her their tribute. Huet, Bishop of Avranches, describes the offering which, when she woke on the morning of the 1st of January 1641, Mlle. de Rambouillet found on her table. It consisted of two books of vellum exactly alike, on each page was a madrigal composed for her by the most distinguished poets, and a flower exquisitely painted in miniature by Robert. It was called the *GUIRLANDE DE JULIE*, and had been imagined for her by M. de Montausier, who wrote the first verses in it himself. Chapelain, Godeau, Colletet, Scudéry, in all nineteen poets, followed his example. Corneille himself wrote the lily, the hyacinth, and the pomegranate.

In short, nothing at this time was more beneficial than the paramount and undisputed influence of women. The literature of the sixteenth century was wanting in beauty of form and in elegance and perfection of language. The women of good society, called then as a term of respect *les Précieuses*, unintentionally undertook the work of Ronsard's *PLÉIADE*, with all the tact and right feeling of their sex. Their effort was to *devulgarise* the language; but instead of trusting to dead languages, they worked with the materials they found around them. This was to reconcile Ronsard with Malherbe; nay, more! it was to open to all that which before had been the secret of the few. From this time forth society understood the charm of conversation: literary men could count on a public: they became themselves men of the world; for the first

time they were admitted as equals to the most distinguished society, and, in this new intercourse, gained as well as gave. Thus was slowly prepared that happy fusion of form and idea, of knowledge and life, which so wonderfully reached its accomplishment under the great Louis.

Still, the society of the Hôtel de Rambouillet was exclusive, a shrine closed to the profane. Its literary code, summed up in one word, to *devulgarise*, was not without its dangers: the greatest was that of substituting the empire of fashion for that of common sense. It is impossible that a circle of society any more than an individual should isolate itself with impunity. Literary spirit may be born in a hot-house, but it cannot grow there: nothing is more fatal to it than that faith in itself which no breath from without comes to shake. Far from avoiding the snare, the *Précieuses* enjoyed it. "One saw," says La Bruyère, "not long ago, a circle of persons of both sexes, bound together by conversation and exchange of wit. They left the art of speaking intelligibly to the vulgar. With them something said which was not very easy to understand was sure to be followed by something else still more obscure, to be outdone in its turn by increasingly incomprehensible enigma after enigma, each greeted with long applause. By what they called delicacy, sentiment, and refinement of expression, they at length became incapable of being understood themselves or of understanding others. Neither good sense, memory, nor the smallest capacity, was a necessary qualification for these entertainments; wit was certainly requisite,—not, however, of the best, but that which is false, and in which the imagination has least play."

Matters became much worse when, in imitation of the Rambouillet reunions, members of other so-called *ruelles*

were formed in Paris and in the provinces, where, as was likely, the faults of the model were much exaggerated. Chapelle describes the *Précieuses* of Montpellier. The future author of the *PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES* was even now making his observations at Pézenas. In Paris there were the *Ruelles* de Sévigné, de Brégy, de Chevreuse, de Cornuel, de Scudéry.

They had terms of their own, so that Sornaise wrote a *DICTIONNAIRE DES PRÉCIEUSES*. "*Chères*" was another name for the *Précieuses* themselves; the Abbés of Bellebat and Buisson were entitled *Grands Introduceurs des Ruelles*, for they instructed young men in the acquirements necessary to the frequenters of these *ruelles*; each woman had a *cavaliere servente*, called *alcôviste*, from the alcove in which was placed the bed to which the *Précieuse* always betook herself when the hour came for her receptions.

The degenerate *Précieuses*, the *Précieuses Ridicules*, attacked first by Desmarets in his comedy of *LES VISIONNAIRES* (1637), finally collapsed beneath the blows of Molière (1659).

**Romances.**—The voluminous romances of De Gomberville, La Calprénède, and Mlle. de Scudéry give us a very good idea of the style of the elegant conversation of this period. The frequenters of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, with Greek, Roman, or Turkish names, are their heroes and heroines. These heroic romances had a French origin and a Spanish education. The first fiction of the kind was *AMADIS OF GAUL*, which, there is little doubt, was originally a French romance of the thirteenth century. Neglected and overlooked like other heroes in his native country, Amadis was welcomed, and clothed in a Portuguese dress, by Vasco de Lobeira in 1403. Spain next adopted him, and surrounded him with all the brilliancy



of Eastern fiction, and the voluptuous and passionate atmosphere of the South. Armed with these new seductions, Amadis returned in the sixteenth century to France, and rekindled there the almost extinct spark of knight-errantry. He was the solace of Francis I.'s captivity. He became French again by the pen of Herberay des Essarts, and brought back with him all those heroes who had long been asleep in French song as in an enchanted castle; but he brought them back, though indeed more highly adorned, yet considerably enervated, so that they recalled the licence, rather than the prowess, of the days of chivalry. Woman, though raised to the rank of a divinity, ceased not to be frail, and as such found greater favour in the eyes of French courtiers, and a warm welcome at the lax and elegant court of Francis I. and Margaret of Valois.

AMADIS was the parent of a numerous race, and if at last his throne crumbled to pieces, it was not for lack of descendants. In his train were PALMERIN DE INGLATERRA, LISUARTE, AMADIS DE GRECIA, ESPLANDIAN, and countless other knights-errant who infested Spain, and furnished fuel for the bonfire of Cervantes' CURA, who did not hesitate to condemn in strong terms, and relegate "to the court," AMADIS DE GRECIA and all his posterity.

Heroic romance, like another phoenix, rose in renewed vigour from its own ashes. To the AMADIS and his fellows of the sixteenth century succeeded the POLEXANDRE, the CLÉOPATRE, the CLÉLIE of the seventeenth; and the absurd and laboured *imbroglios* of the ten-volume histories of these latter worthies made the heroes of the preceding age regretted.

**Balzac and Voiture.**—The literature of the first half of the seventeenth century is perhaps more than any other the expression of society. It began with letters, which

are only written conversation, and ended with tragedy, which may be called heroic conversation.

The two brightest luminaries of the *ruelles* were Balzac and Voiture, both of whom owe the greater part of their fame to their letters. The former in his youth went to Rome as secretary to the Cardinal La Valette. Whilst there, he devoted much of his time to the study of Italian literature, and was struck with its great superiority in richness and in polish of language to that of his own country. On his return, after several years' absence, to France, he set himself to do for prose what Malherbe had done for poetry, and by his labours acquired for himself the reputation of the most eloquent writer of his time, and the reformer of the French language. Though he had many admirers, he was not without many detractors, the most conspicuous and bitter of whom was the monk Goulu. Balzac replied to the invectives of Goulu in several pamphlets under the *nom de plume* of Ogier; but at length, wearied of these polemics, he returned to his ancestral *château* in Angoulême, and lived in almost total seclusion, or, in his own words, "at the antipodes, where there is nothing but air, earth, and a river. A journey of ten days is necessary to find a man, therefore there is no communication but with the dead."<sup>4</sup> He was no philosopher, and was absolutely indifferent to his fellow-creatures. "We should never have done," he writes, "if we were to take to heart the affairs of the world, and nourish a passion for mankind."<sup>5</sup> Art had no charms for him; he "has little admiration for marble which is speechless, and paintings which are by means so beautiful as reality." Whether he had any depth of feeling seems a question. "Since my last letter," he writes to one of his correspondents, "I have lost my good old father" (*mon*

<sup>4</sup> *LETTERS DIVERSES*, b. i., l. ix.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, b. ii., l. i.

*bonhomme de père*). Thus his eloquence was without depth; but with all his shortcomings, we cannot refuse to acknowledge him as the creator of those noble and harmonious forms in which eloquence was soon to clothe itself,—the pioneer of the oratory of Pascal and Bossuet.

If Balzac was the Malherbe of prose, Voiture was its Desportes. He had, however, no intention of being an author, and printed nothing in his lifetime. A quarto volume of his letters and verses was published in Paris two years after his death, in 1648, by his nephew, M. de Pinchesne. He was of low origin, the son of a wine-seller; his one wish was to enjoy life, he never dreamed of posthumous fame. He wrote to please his fair correspondents, not to amuse posterity, and he had his reward. His contemporaries thought him the most perfect of writers, and disputed for his letters. Condé, Grammont, Lavalette, D'Avaux, corresponded with this son of a tradesman. Even Boileau was carried away in the torrent of admiration, and did not hesitate to rank him next to Horace. Voltaire, in his *SIÈCLE DE LOUIS XIV.*, remarks that he was the first instance in France of a *bel-esprit*, but says little else in his praise. Recent criticism has somewhat unduly depreciated him. There is no remark more telling in its conciseness than that of his most youthful critic, Mlle. de Bourbon, afterwards Mme. de Longueville, then only twelve years old, that "he should be preserved in sugar." Voiture himself records it in a letter to Mlle. Paulet.

There is no doubt but that Voiture was the first to introduce *esprit* into literature, which won for him the affectionate admiration of Frenchmen. His writings were a pleasing reaction from the laboured and stilted style of the sixteenth century. A grateful nation forgave any-

thing to the first writer, who was likewise a man of the world.

He is said to have been introduced to the Hôtel de Rambouillet by M. de Chaudebonne, and this introduction was the beginning of his fortunes. From that time his life was spent in the society of the great. He was sent on missions to foreign courts, and was fêted there as he had been at home. He delighted the upper classes of the Mad-rileños by writing verses in their own tongue, which they at first ascribed to Lope da Vega. At Rome, which he visited more than once, he was elected a member of the *Umoristi*. He was sent to Florence to announce to the Grand Duke the birth of the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XIV. At the court of his own sovereign he was *maître d'hôtel*, and *Introducteur d'Ambassadeurs* to the Duke of Orleans; besides which he was one of the first members of the Academy founded by Richelieu, the chief minister of the Crown.

We must not pass over without mention the poets Mainard and Segrais; the court-favourite Benserade, whose reputation as a writer of ballets and sonnets Molière's ridicule could not destroy; Brébœuf, the translator of Lucan; the tiny, ugly, witty Abbé Godeau, *le nain de Julie*, whose paraphrase of the BENEDICTE was rewarded by Richelieu with the bishopric of Grasse; the learned and worthy Chapelain, a distinguished critic and grammarian, who had the misfortune to imagine himself an epic poet, and provoked the bitter ridicule of Boileau by his JEANNE D'ARC; the vain and self-satisfied Georges de Scudéry, whose numerous dramas have long since been consigned to the obscurity they deserve; the Jesuit Lemoine, author of SAINT LOUIS, of whom Boileau remarked that he was too much of a madman to be spoken well of, and too much of a poet to be spoken ill of; and, last but not least, Scarron.


**Scarron.**—Paul Scarron sprang of an ancient family, and but for the machinations of his stepmother would have succeeded to a considerable inheritance. By her arts he was exiled from home, and reduced to absolute poverty. He effected a reconciliation with his father by promising to enter upon an ecclesiastical career, for which his life and disposition rendered him totally unfit, as his gross and scandalous debauchery soon showed. He was, however, made Canon of Le Mans, a preferment which he lost by his marriage with the dowerless Mlle. d'Aubigné, known to fame as Mme. de Maintenon. Before his marriage he had become, from exposure in a wild freak, a disfigured and ailing cripple. He bore pain and disease with more than equanimity, for his spirits never flagged, and his lively wit and mocking parodies were the amusement of the gay court. The society at his house, the favourite resort of the wits of the day, was celebrated as brilliant and select, and lost nothing by being presided over by his wife.

His writings bear the impress of his mind, which was as grotesque as his person. A maimed and deformed wit, he made the world in his own image, turned heroism into ridicule, wrote the *TYPHON*, and travestied the *ÆNEID*. The best pamphlets at the time of the Fronde were Scarron's, and his *MAZARINADES* were renowned. He won a similar victory over metaphysical, love-sick romances to that Cervantes had won over exaggerated stories of knight-errantry. To the same school belongs the learned poet and historian Sarrasin, who made letters rather a pastime than a study, and "rose far above mediocrity, without reaching real beauty."<sup>6</sup>

The *salon bleu* of Arthénice opposed to these far from

<sup>6</sup> GÉRUZEZ, *ESSAIS D'HISTOIRE LITTÉRAIRE*, a clever and learned critic, whom the reader will do well to consult on this period.

reverential muses the tender and harmonious Racan, the best pupil of Malherbe, as superior to his master in gracefulness and feeling as he is inferior to him in accuracy and regularity. Racan alone, in the midst of a sophisticated society, preserved a love for and an acquaintance with the country. A breath of Virgil moves in his verses, and their harmony seems a harbinger of Racine.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE AGE OF RICHELIEU.—THE DRAMA.

**Predecessors of Corneille.**—Scudéry, Racan, Scarron, and many of their contemporaries, did not restrict their efforts to obtaining the silent approbation of readers; they were ambitious of a higher renown, the possibility of which was in itself a sign of social progress. They worked for the stage. However restricted the publicity of dramatic representations may be amongst ourselves, there is still a great advance in these assemblies open to all, on the privileged and exclusive *cooteries* over which Voiture and Balzac reigned. French literature made an appeal to the people, and felt that it had a public as judge.

In fact, the drama had just emerged from the colleges where it had been shut up with Jodelle and Garnier. The Confraternity of the Passion, dispossessed of their Mysteries by the Decree of 1548, and reduced to a wretched existence on farces, moralities, and pastorals, had at length ceded the Hôtel de Bourgogne to a troupe of real comedians. This company, a little less miserable than its strolling fellows who wandered about on the highways exposed to all the accidents of the *Roman Comique*, had for chief, stage-manager, and general contractor, Alexandre Hardy, a manufacturer of tragedies rather than a poet. For thirty years his inexhaustible fancy

satisfied the needs of the actors and the curiosity of the public. We are assured that he composed seven hundred pieces; forty-one, all in verse, remain to us. One week was enough for him in which to invent, write, and bring out a tragedy. He not only imitated Spanish authors, he plagiarised them. Cervantes and Lope de Vega were to him mines of wealth, from which he drew dross as well as gold, and saved himself the trouble of recasting. He possessed, however, boldness, energy of expression, and a remarkable appreciation of the stage. He knew exactly how to seize on an interesting situation, and had the instinct of effect. It was thus that he carried away the public. Placed between two kinds of unreality, he had the good sense to prefer Spanish stage-tricks to Italian affectation. "Tragic verse," he used to say, "should have a masculine vigour, be continuously sustained, without puns or rhyming prose, or without making mountains of molehills." Hardy's theory was in advance of his practice. He knew what was good, but lacked the power to accomplish it. At all events, we must give him the credit for having thrown off the yoke of the *Précieuses*, and forced his audience to applaud something besides what they extolled.<sup>1</sup>

However, the wit of the Hôtel de Rambouillet was put upon the stage by Théophile Viaud<sup>2</sup> in his piece of *PYRAME ET THISBÉ*. Gongora had already treated the same subject, with all the verbose and pompous obscurity for which his name is famous. Viaud was not behind his model; his characters speak the most exaggerated language of the *alcóvistas*, their dialogues abound in conceits. For once the *Cultoristas* were outdone; Spain was left behind.

<sup>1</sup> Hardy was born in Paris in 1564, and died in 1630.

<sup>2</sup> Born near Agen in 1590, died in 1626.



At the first representation of Scudéry's *AMOUR TYRANNIQUE*, the door-keepers were crushed to death by the crowd, an important moral fact, betokening as it does the eagerness of the public for an intellectual pleasure.

The poets were not behind the people in their ardour for the stage. The names of ninety-six dramatic poets, contemporaries of Hardy, and witnesses of the first successes of the great Corneille, have come down to us. Of these we may mention Mairet, whose *SOPHONISBE* and *DUC D'OSSONE* give evidence of both Spanish and Italian influences; Tristan, with more poetry and soul than the last, whose *MARIANNE*, imitated from Calderon's *TETRARCA DE JERUSALEN*, drew tears from Cardinal de Richelieu, and almost overcame the author himself, who was taking the part of Herod; and Duryer, superior to both, who might have been great but that his best situations and finest characters are emasculated by Italian softness; his chief piece is *SAUL*.

There is yet another name more glorious than these, Jean de Rotrou, whose heroic death, of an epidemic caught in the noble discharge of his duties in his native town of Dreux (1650), revealed the greatness of soul his *VÉRITABLE SAINT-GENAIS* and *VENCESLAS* had shadowed forth. His earlier pieces, *L'HYPOCHONDRIQUE*, written at the age of nineteen, *ANTIGONE*, and *BÉLISAIRE*, were written hurriedly in imitation of Spanish comedies, under pressure of poverty, and have less merit.

**Corneille.**—It was just one year (1629) after the appearance of Rotrou's first piece that a young and undistinguished barrister arrived in Paris from Rouen. He brought with him a comedy, the plot of which was founded on an incident in his own life. This comedy of the unknown Corneille was soon put upon the Parisian stage, and its success was wonderful. To accommodate the number of spectators that flocked to see it, the actors

divided into two troupes, and acted it simultaneously at the Marais and at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. It was followed by CLITANDRE, LA VEUVE, LA GALERIE DU PALAIS, LA SUIVANTE, LA PLACE ROYALE.

Hitherto it had been a received principle that poetry of all kinds was a distinct language, quite different from that of real life. Corneille was the first to detect and combat this fallacy. He banished from his stage nurses, parasites, valets; he strove to make his actors speak the language of human beings, preserving the single unreality of the *tutoiement* of lovers. His early characteristics were good sense and wit; genius he showed later. The first taught him unity of action and of scene, and "inspired him," as he tells us, "with an aversion for the horrible confusion that put Paris, Rome, and Constantinople on the same stage."

Thus the classic spirit of the Renaissance was awaking of its own accord in France. All the great minds accepted the dogma of the Three Unities. Richelieu himself aspired to literary glory, and adhered to the Aristotelian precept. He was the sponsor, if not the parent, of MIRAME, for the representation of which the great hall of the Palais-Cardinal (now the Palais-Royal) was built. Sometimes, also, between the plans of two campaigns, he would sketch the plan of a tragedy, the execution of which he would leave to his brigade of poets. This brigade numbered five,—Corneille, Boisrobert, Colletet, De l'Estoile, Rotrou. Each poet wrote his own act, the Cardinal arbitrated, corrected, and paid. On one occasion, transported with admiration, he gave Colletet sixty *pistoles* for four lines describing the fountain at the Tuileries,<sup>3</sup> notwithstanding

<sup>3</sup> *A même temps j'ai vu sur le bord d'un ruisseau  
La cane s'humecter de la bourbe de l'eau,  
D'une voix enrouée et d'un battement d'aile,  
Animer le canard qui languit auprès d'elle.*

which Colletet refused to change *s'humecter* in the second line to *barbotter*, as Richelieu requested.<sup>4</sup>

Corneille was even more indocile, and found fault with the plan of a third act which had fallen to his lot. Richelieu was much displeased, and dismissed him from his service, saying that he had not *l'esprit de suite*. This was fortunate for tragedy.

The early comedies of Corneille are almost forgotten, they are dull and tedious, with no merit but ingenuity of construction. The *MÉDÉE*, which appeared in 1635, gave the first evidence of genius, and some of its passages are interesting as showing the development of a young poet. The famous line—

“Que vous reste-t-il contre tant d'ennemis ? Moi !”<sup>5</sup>

was the “*Cogito, ergo sum*,” of French tragedy. It announced that heroic drama, which, like philosophy, was to be founded on the powers of human personality.

Little by little, French originality triumphed over Spanish imitation ; Richelieu eclipsed Anne of Austria. As if to mark this emancipation, the first master-piece of Corneille was a Spanish subject, treated according to French genius. An old courtier at Rouen, M. de Chalon, had recommended him to study the Spanish dramatists, and more especially the comedy, *LAS MOCEDADES DEL CID*, of Guillen de Castro, which perhaps of all Spanish comedies had most completely separated itself from the Spain of its day, to throw itself back into the heroic past. It breathes the noble pride and haughty independence of the great vassals of the Middle Ages, and was so only all the more national. The great deeds of the Cid, his rough generosity, his unflinching valour, his incorruptible loyalty,

<sup>4</sup> The plays we owe to Richelieu's company of poets are *LES TUILERIES*, *L'AVEUGLE DE SMYRNE*, *LA GRANDE PASTORALE*.

<sup>5</sup> “What remains to you against so many enemies ? Myself !”

his enthusiastic faith,—every stroke of this grand poetic picture was, so to speak, the ancient heritage of Spain. Castilian honour could see itself reflected in every page. It seemed as if old traditions and old popular romances had taken to themselves a body, a visible existence, that they might come down upon the scene, and speak before the eyes of men. There was the arming of Rodrigo ; the high-minded and discreet love of the Infante Urraca ; the blow given by the Count d'Orgaz in the presence of King Ferdinand ; the strange ordeal by which Don Diego fathomed the courage of his children ; the return upon the scene of the insulted old man, his cheek stained with the offender's blood ; S. Lazarus appearing to Don Rodrigo in the disgusting condition of a leper, the coarse and repulsive details of which condition (which none but a Spanish public would have suffered) furnished the poet with an opportunity of producing a sublime effect. The accounts of the Cid's combats with the Moors were given with all the simple familiarity of a shepherd, and this popular language made an appeal that could never be unheeded to the religious hatreds of the Castilian people. Then the action was carried on after the death of Ximena ; there was the siege of Calahorra, and the heroic combats of the sons of Arias, that "old Horatius" of Spain. The characters were numberless, events succeeded each other rapidly without flagging or loss of vigour ; but the ideal action seemed lost beneath this exterior agitation, and hidden behind so many waving plumes and shining suits of armour.

Corneille could not hope to interest the French with the personal memories of a neighbouring people. He disengaged and brought into prominence that very ideal action which the Spanish poet had overlooked. The interest of his immortal tragedy lies in the moral combat between

honour and love in Rodrigue, and between love and duty in Chimène.

The *CID* was the subject in which Corneille discovered his own genius, and that tragic principle which from henceforth made his power. Admiration was what he first tried to excite, but out of this naturally calm sentiment he elaborated a passion as seductive as it was noble. At the outset Corneille reached the highest aim of art,—that of ennobling whilst touching the souls of men. With the *CID* the outward form of French tragedy—created in the first instance by chance, imitation, and national instinct—at last found the soul which was to make it move, the living force which was to justify its creation.

There are undoubtedly some Castilian touches in the *CID*: the elevation of soul, the vigour of thought, the burning passions of the South; these he borrowed from Spain.

The Parisians were roused to enthusiasm by its appearance. "*Beau comme le Cid*" became a proverb. In spite of the criticisms of the Academy, instigated by the jealousy of Richelieu and the comic fury of Scudéry, its success was triumphant, and Corneille maintained his reputation by producing *HORACE*, *CINNA*, and *POLYEUCTE*. This last some have called his master-piece: it was certainly the culminating point of his genius. *CINNA* was the apotheosis, so to speak, of monarchy, and *POLYEUCTE* the triumph of religion,—two of the principles of life which animated the seventeenth century. The third principle, the influence of women, was reserved for Racine. After the production of *POLYEUCTE* the genius of Corneille declined, only to flicker up once again in the *TOISON D'OR*. He died at the age of seventy-eight (1684), having been for thirty-seven years a member of the Academy.

Corneille's chief merit is dignity. He wrote when the

French tongue was still in an uncultivated state, so that the barbarisms which he sometimes perpetrated must be excused. Let us see what his critics say of him. "The morality of his heroes," says Sainte-Beuve, "is spotless. Whether as fathers, lovers, friends, or enemies, one cannot but admire and honour them. In pathetic parts, their sublime accents carry us away, and make us weep. But his rivals and his husbands have sometimes a touch of the ridiculous. . . . His tyrants and his step-mothers are all of a piece with his heroes, wicked to the very core; and yet, at the sight of a noble action, it sometimes happens that they turn right about face, and return suddenly to virtue. . . . Corneille's men are formal and punctilious; they quarrel on points of *étiquette*; they engage in long discussions, and argue in a loud voice with themselves even in their passion. . . . His heroines, his *adorables furies*, all resemble each other: their love is subtle, combined, far-fetched, and comes more from the head than the heart. One feels how little Corneille knew women. . . . To our thinking Corneille's style is the merit by which he excels. . . . With all its negligences, it seems to me one of the greatest of the age which possessed Molière and Bossuet. The poet's touch is rough, severe, vigorous. . . . There is but little painting or colouring in this style. It is warm rather than dazzling; it turns willingly to the abstract; and imagination yields to thought and reasoning. . . . In short, Corneille, a pure genius, incomplete, with his lofty parts and his defects, reminds me of those huge trees whose trunks are naked, rugged, gloomy, and monotonous, and whose tops are crowned with branches and sombre foliage. They are strong, powerful, gigantic, but of scanty leafage; an abundant sap runs through them; but one must hope for neither shelter, shade, nor flowers. Their leaves come

late, and soon begin to fall, yet they live long half bare. Even after their bald head has given up its leaves to the autumn wind, their lively nature throws out here and there useless branches and green shoots. As death approaches, their creakings and groanings are like those of the trunk laden with armour to which Lucan compared Pompey the Great." <sup>6</sup>

Voltaire, though not blind to the faults of Corneille, was such an admirer of his, that when he heard that his grand-niece was homeless and penniless, he not only took her into his home at Ferney, and educated her, but on her marriage with a captain of dragoons, he wrote a commentary on the poet's works, the proceeds of which—50,000 francs—formed her marriage-portion.

We will close our observations on Corneille with a quotation from Mme. de Sévigné:—"Long live our old friend Corneille! Let us forgive him his bad lines for the sake of the divine and sublime beauties which enraptured us: they are inimitable master-strokes. Despréaux speaks even more strongly than I do; in a word, it is good taste."

To substitute ideas for pictures; to make noble, great, and even somewhat austere thought pierce through the play of wit and fashion; to invent the poetry of passion and of reason,—such was the literary *rôle* of Corneille. It is thus that he is a truly national poet. Thanks to him, France escaped from Spain and Italy, to find herself again, and to find herself elevated by the genius of one man. She welcomed ancient tradition, but she stamped on it the impress of her own civilisation; she accepted foreign inspirations, but she transformed them; and in so doing she did something for the whole world, and enlarged the common heritage of humanity. Thus her poetry

<sup>6</sup> CRITIQUES ET PORTRAITS LITTÉRAIRES, vol. i., Art. Corneille.

became entitled to a place in the train of that of Greece and of Rome, and to the name of classic.

Hence in the early part of the seventeenth century French literary spirit had attained to its ideal in the Beautiful: whilst it was at the same time striving after it in the True, where its victories were none the less glorious. We cannot follow it in these marvellous achievements, but must content ourselves with a glance at philosophy, the mountain-top where meet the two slopes of science and letters.



## CHAPTER XII.

### THE AGE OF RICHELIEU—PHILOSOPHY AND ELOQUENCE.

**Descartes.**—The seventeenth century shows itself from its very birth to be an organic epoch. In it all the arts and sciences submit themselves to a harmonious unity. It seems as if a single mind, a single soul beating within it, found expression by the different organs in turn. Christian sentiment in all its truth spreads itself like life through French society, and animates the whole body.

*Mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet.*

Science and Poetry seem to be two dialects of the same tongue; Descartes is the Corneille of philosophy. Both take an unfettered moral responsibility as the basis of their labours. Corneille had driven from the stage that noisy confusion of irrelevant events, fortuitous incidents, and adventitious complications which in Spain had too often stifled ideal action and the play of character. He had sought the springs of the drama in the human soul. There was something abstract in French tragedy; it was psychology in action. What the poet had done by natural genius and inspiration, the philosopher was about to prescribe as a law. He was about to raise the instinct of the artist to the dignity of a method.

What vast differences between the philosophy of the

seventeenth century and the vague but noble aspirations of the sixteenth ! The latter was a period of revolution, of tumultuous insurrection against the Middle Ages. All the various systems of philosophy were in a confused state of fermentation. The representative man of the day was Montaigne, learned, inquiring, and calmly sceptical. In the early part of the seventeenth century (1619), Lucilio Vanini, an Italian, was burned at Toulouse, by order of the parliament of that city, on a charge of atheism. One of his books, said to savour of Pantheism, had previously been condemned by the Sorbonne to the flames. His fellow-countryman Giordano Bruno had suffered a similar death at Rome nineteen years before ; he was a successor of the Neo-Platonists and the Alexandrians, and had fiercely combated the doctrines of the Aristotelians. New Philosophy already had its Ionics and its Eleatics. It was awaiting its Socrates.

Réné Descartes (Renatus Cartesius) was born of noble Breton parents at La Haye in Touraine, March 31st, 1596. His mother died of a disease of the lungs a few days after his birth, and the constitution of the boy was so delicate and sickly, that till his twenty-first year there seemed to be imminent danger of his early death. His education was confided to the Jesuits of La Flèche, where he was instructed in logic, rhetoric, physics, mathematics, and the dead languages. At the age of eight he was called the Young Philosopher. At sixteen he had exhausted contemporary science, and, discovering its hollowness, had determined to give up the study of books, and resolved "to seek no other science than that which I could find in myself or in the great book of the world ; to employ the remainder of my youth in travel, in seeing courts and camps, in frequenting people of diverse humours and conditions, in collecting various experiences,

and, above all, in striving to draw some profitable reflection from what I saw.”<sup>1</sup>

In pursuance of this plan, he led for many years a roving and unsettled life. In his twenty-first year he volunteered as a soldier, and served in the Dutch, Bavarian, and Imperialist armies, and was present at the battle of Prague in 1620. Even while living the life of camps he pursued his mathematical and philosophical studies, and at three and twenty had conceived the great design of reforming philosophy. He separated algebra from the irrelevant considerations which hemmed it in, and gave to a science, whose whole force is abstraction, all the abstraction of which it is susceptible. He next applied his science to geometry, and taught us how to resolve problems which defied the ancients. But these marvellous discoveries were only the apprenticeship of his genius. He was not searching for particular methods, but for *Method* itself,—that great and universal road which leads from the human mind to truth. He no longer desired an abstraction, but an assured and well-known reality as a lever with which to raise the world.

At length he forsook men, as he had before forsaken books. At Nuremberg he shut himself up all day long “*dans un poêle*.” In Paris he hid himself from his friends for two years. Thence he visited Holland, where he subjected himself to an austere discipline, eating sparingly, and deadening his imagination and his senses, that he might live by his intellect alone. An anchorite of philosophy, he prepared himself religiously for the pure worship of idealism.

Descartes had begun by rejecting provisionally from his mind all hitherto accepted beliefs, “in order to replace them either by better ones, or by the old ones again after

<sup>1</sup> DISCOURS DE LA MÉTHODE.

they had been fitted to the level of reason." To reconstruct the edifice, he created a method borrowed from the sciences that he had so long studied. To admit nothing but what was evident, to divide difficulties in order to conquer them, to proceed always from the simple to the complex, invariably to make exact calculations; such are the four rules which directed his advance. The chains of reasoning which he observed in geometric proportions suggested to him the hope that all things which came within human knowledge might follow each other in a similar chain.

This method was in itself a revolution. By it Descartes placed certitude in that evidence of which reason is the sole judge. This was to dethrone at one stroke the principle of authority, and to create a real philosophy.

Descartes confirmed this new power by the first results he obtained from it. Armed with his Method, he plunged boldly into the abyss of doubt. He found there successively himself, God, and the Universe. *I think, therefore I am; therefore God is; therefore the outer world exists*: such are the successive victories of Descartes. If afterwards he lost himself in fruitless hypotheses, he had at least given the law which served to reject them, and placed in personal consciousness the fundamental and most solid basis of all philosophy.

It is a remarkable fact that the great French geometrician, who was likewise a great natural philosopher, and even for his time a great physiologist, directed his principal efforts towards the analysis of the soul, that is psychology. His school was emphatically metaphysical and idealist. Spinoza and Malebranche were his disciples; Leibnitz is Descartes with half a century of progress. Before him in England, Francis Bacon, another great regenerator of philosophy, had promulgated a new

method, but his powerful system of Induction was directed to natural sciences. His school rapidly degenerated; Hobbes, Gassendi, and Locke are his legitimate successors. Thus in the field of thought, the tendencies of each of these two nations were being revealed; France and England seemed to divide the modern world.

The DISCOURS DE LA MÉTHODE, written by Descartes in 1637, is the first master-piece of modern French prose, the first specimen of the simple majestic language of the seventeenth century. It is no longer, as with Montaigne, a personal idiom, a quaintly graceful compound of French, Latin, and Gascon; nor is it, as with Balzac, an external form devoid of elegance; it is the language of all, stamped with the impress of the genius of one; with him speech reassumes its proper rôle as the fit and modest clothing of thought, and it is remarkable that it is this very subordination which gives it all its value. In fact, as Descartes himself said, "Those who have the strongest reasoning powers, and who best digest their own thoughts in order to make them clear and intelligible, can always best persuade others of that which they urge, even if they can only speak *bas-breton*,<sup>1</sup> and are totally ignorant of rhetoric." Here, indeed, is that speech which proposes to itself to persuade, that is, to attain the aim of its eloquence. So it becomes grave, severe, imposing, sometimes even imperious. Instead of spending time in ornamentation, the philosopher moves straight forward, and one feels that his whole desire is to convince. His ideas are linked together, his arguments follow close upon each other, his language is a chain of ideas that nothing can break. "As soon as the DISCOURS DE LA MÉTHODE appeared, simultaneously almost with the Cid, every wise mind in France, weary of impotent imitations, and in love with the true, the

<sup>1</sup> A Keltic dialect unintelligible to the French.

beautiful, and the great, recognised at once that they had found the language they were in search of. Henceforth they spoke no other—the weak indifferently, the strong with added qualities of their own indeed, but all based on an unchangeable foundation, which had become the heritage and the rule of all.”<sup>3</sup>

Descartes died at Stockholm in 1650, in his fifty-fourth year, the honoured guest of Queen Christina.

At one time of his life, at Utrecht, he had only escaped by the influence of his friends from being condemned as an atheist, and having his books publicly burnt. He did not venture to publish an astronomical treatise he had written, having the fear of Galileo’s sufferings before his eyes.

Descartes was undoubtedly the representative intellect of the seventeenth century. His style, however, on account of its very perfection, only possesses the qualities of its subject. It addresses itself solely to the intellect, and has only that moderate heat which animates and vivifies argument. “O Flesh!” contemptuously exclaimed this philosopher, apostrophising the most illustrious of his opponents, Gassendi, who retorted with no less justice, “O Idea!”

**Pascal.**—Between flesh and idea, there was room for soul. Pascal is the necessary complement of the apostle of pure reason; in reading him we feel that he was tried and suffered. “If he is greater than us, it is because his head is higher; his feet are as low down as ours.”<sup>4</sup> “We are astonished and charmed on opening his book, for we expected to see an author, and we find a man.”<sup>5</sup>

From his childhood Pascal “terrified his father by

<sup>3</sup> Victor Cousin, *RAPPORT À L’ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE SUR LA NÉCESSITÉ D’UNE NOUVELLE ÉDITION DES PENSÉES DE PASCAL*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *PENSÉES DIVERSES*.

<sup>5</sup> *PENSÉES SUR L’ÉLOQUENCE ET LE STYLE*.

the grandeur and power of his genius.”<sup>6</sup> When only twelve years old, he discovered, without the help of books or oral instruction, the elements of geometry; at sixteen he produced his *TRAITÉ DES SECTIONS CONIQUES*. Unfortunately his health gave way before his unwearied activity,—from the age of eighteen he never passed a day without suffering.

The first years of his young manhood were very different from those of that later austere and ascetic life which we connect with the name of Pascal. Being forbidden all work by his doctors, he threw himself into the vortex of the world's pleasures. It was at this time that he wrote *DISCOURS SUR LES PASSIONS DE L'AMOUR*, which, though not in his firm and concise style, is fresh and touching, like those smiling valleys one comes upon cradled in some recess of a stern and lofty mountain. It was not long before an accident, which put his life in danger, changed his course of living, and, recalling the religious sentiments of his childhood, drove him into the arms of the recluses of Port-Royal.

**Port-Royal.**—At the gates of Paris, about three leagues from Versailles, the seventeenth century saw a memorable reproduction of the austerities of the Thebaid and the ascetic labours of Lérins. The monastery of Port-Royal, an abbey of the Order of Cîteaux, founded in 1204 by Matilda, wife of Matthew I. of Montmorency-Marly, during her husband's absence in the fourth crusade, lay, on the left of the high road from Rambouillet to Chartres, in a spot which had once been called, from its natural features, Porrois.<sup>7</sup> Abandoned for a long time to the *far niente* existence of ordinary convents, it had at length, in the beginning of the seventeenth century,

<sup>6</sup> The words of his sister, Mme. Périer.

<sup>7</sup> From *Porra* or *Borra*, dog-Latin for a woody valley, with stagnant water: *Cavus dumetis plenus ubi stagnat acqua.*

fallen under the direction of the family of Arnauld, the famous advocate of the University against the Jesuits in 1594. His sister Angélique-Jacqueline was, through family interest, appointed abbess, when only seven and a half years old. Touched by grace as she grew to womanhood, she undertook the reform of the convent. Her mother, five of her sisters, and six nieces, became her spiritual children. Soon after the inflexible Saint-Cyran was appointed director, and imprinted on Port-Royal the gloomy character of Jansenism. A whole colony of illustrious penitents joined him: three brothers of La Mère Angélique; her nephew, the celebrated advocate Le-maitre; and his brothers Séricourt and De Sacy; Nicole; Lancelot, the grammarian; and Antoine Arnauld, the "*great Arnauld*," the youngest brother of the abbess, the learned and impetuous Doctor of the Sorbonne, whose condemnation by that body occasioned the *PROVINCIALES*.

The religious movement of the seventeenth century was as remarkable as the philosophical. Jansenists and Jesuits undertook the re-establishment of that spiritual power which had suffered from the attacks of philosophy; but between these two parties there was bitter strife.

Port-Royal was the head-quarters of Jansenism, which has been called Calvinistic Catholicism. "The attempt of the Port-Royalists at reconstruction embraced exactly those parts of mediæval religion which the Jesuits had neglected. Wholly abandoning what the Jesuits had taken hold of, the social and political side of Catholicism, they clung to its personal, mystical, and ascetic side."<sup>8</sup> They did not quarrel with the Church; they desired to remain Catholic in spite of the Pope, believing in the priesthood and the sacraments. They aimed at a metaphysical and moral reform, and pointed to S. Paul and

<sup>8</sup> FRANCE UNDER RICHELIEU AND COLBERT. Bridges. Lect. iv.



S. Augustine as their inspirers. They took their name from Cornelius Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, the author of a posthumous work on S. Augustine, in which the writer had adopted some of the ideas of Baius of Louvain on grace and predestination. The Jesuits adopted and proclaimed the opinions of the Spaniard Molina, who had undertaken, in his *DE CONCORDIA GRATIÆ ET LIBERI ARBITRII*, to reconcile free-will and predestination. The Jansenists insisted upon predestination, and taught that good works were without merit; that grace alone, arbitrarily given or refused, made saints. Theirs was a Christianity as terrible as the Fate of the ancients. They pursued human nature, corrupted by the Fall, with an implacable hatred. The logical conclusion of such a doctrine was the salvation of the few; the Church of Jansenism was an aristocracy of grace.

Opposed to this rigorous and narrowly logical school was the old and simple orthodoxy which Bossuet was about to represent, and S. François de Sales to express in picturesque language, less vivacious, but more graceful and winning than that of Montaigne. François was born at Sales in Savoy in 1560, and died Bishop of Geneva, in 1612, at Lyons. Nature was to him a poetic symbol of the goodness of God. His principal works are *INTRODUCTION À LA VIE DÉVOTE*; *TRAITÉ DE L'AMOUR DE DIEU*; *L'ÉTENDARD DE LA SAINTE CROIX*; *SERMONS*; *LETTERS*.

The Church, notwithstanding her corruptions and misfortunes, was still faithful to the eternal ideas of justice and truth. Without denying grace, which is only the perpetual influence of the Creator on the creature, the mysterious link by which finite beings are bound to the infinite; without repudiating the dogma of the Fall and the Redemption, which was imposed on her by tradition, and which, even for the philosopher, was the dogma of

creation and progress; the Church kept, for the belief of man, free-will, the merit of good works, and the vocation of all, that is, the justice of God. She held the two ends of the chain firmly, and was not alarmed if she could not see each separate link.

The Jesuits were active and enterprising, vowed to all the ambitions of the Court of Rome, and of incontestable ability. Side by side with imaginary crimes imputed to them by their enemies was that undeniable one of forgetting that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and of prostituting religion to the ambitious designs of the hierarchy. In the pursuit of their ideal, they stooped to unscrupulous intrigue, and modified their moral standard to suit the most lax.

“Know then that their object is not to corrupt manners; that is not their design: but neither is it their only aim to reform them. That would be a mistaken policy. This is their idea. They have a sufficiently good opinion of themselves to believe that it is useful and even necessary for the well-being of religion that their credit should spread everywhere, and that they should rule every conscience. And since severe, evangelical maxims are adapted for ruling some sorts of persons, they make use of them on those occasions on which they are favourable to them. But as these same maxims are not to the way of thinking of most people, they leave them to the former sort, so that they may be in a position to satisfy every one.”<sup>9</sup>

Pascal retired to Port-Royal at the very time (1654) that the party there had need of so strong a support. Arnauld was about to be condemned by the Sorbonne, and there was every danger that the world, which did not trouble itself to read the obscure discussions of theo-

logians, would abide by the judgment, and hold the Jesuits to have gained the cause. Pascal changed the order of battle. He addressed himself to the public, appealed from authority to common sense, pretending that it was easier to find monks than reasons. Then, for the first time, men of the world and women were constituted judges of great questions. The necessity of making oneself read and understood by such a tribunal made a *chef-d'œuvre* of the *PROVINCIALES* (1656). "Brevity, clearness, an unknown elegance, a caustic and natural wit, expressions that cling to one, assured for it a popular success. . . . I should admire *LES LETTRES PROVINCIALES* less, if they had not been written before Molière. Pascal understood good comedy. He introduces on the scene several actors : an indifferent person who receives all the confidences of anger and of passion ; sincere party-men ; insincere party-men, more ardent than the others ; honest peace-makers universally repulsed ; hypocrites universally welcomed : a very comedy of manners."<sup>2</sup>

In the first three *PROVINCIALES*, Pascal treats of the difficult question of grace, a subject all the more knotty inasmuch as his party defended the hard and narrow side of the problem, and had nothing in its favour but its frankness, its inflexible logic, and the tortuous ambiguities of its adversaries. Till now their antagonists had been, not the Jesuits themselves, but their kind and inconsequent allies, the Dominicans. After the fourth letter, Pascal cleverly transported the struggle to another field more favourable to his party and more accessible to the general public. He attacked the morality of the Casuists, and from that moment the good sense of the public was entirely on his side. Then it was that he unrolled that terrible list of Jesuitical propositions, in

<sup>1</sup> Villemain. *DISCOURS ET MÉLANGES LITTÉRAIRES*, Pascal.

which every vice and crime finds its justification, and the voice of conscience is stifled by the decision of a theologian. Ironical and vehement by turns, Pascal climbed to the very climax of eloquence. Sometimes he reminds us of the satire of the Dialogues of Plato; sometimes of the Philippics of Demosthenes and Cicero. Voltaire calls him the first French satirist, and says:—"The first comedies of Molière have not more salt than the first LETTRES PROVINCIALES; Bossuet has nothing more sublime than the last."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless the PROVINCIALES were not the favourite labour of Pascal. He prepared in silence the materials of a great work which death prevented his accomplishing, but its scattered fragments are sufficient to insure for their author the admiration of posterity; they have been recently collected by M. Faugère. Pascal wished to go much farther than Descartes, and taking by the hand a doubting, indifferent reader, to seat him docile and faithful at the feet of religion. A pupil of Montaigne, filled with his spirit and his style, and the heir of Saint-Cyran, whose gloomy doctrine had been transmitted to him by Singlin and Sacy, he combined these two influences in the most remarkable manner. By a bold manœuvre, he attempted to turn the scepticism of his first master against rational metaphysics, to the advantage of the faith of his second.

For him then there is neither reason, justice, truth, nor natural law. Human nature is deeply corrupted by its original fall. Grace is its only resource, faith the only refuge for reason convinced of its own impotence. So Pascal jumps from Montaigne to Jansenius, without stopping at Descartes. Yet his is not the cold calculation of a sectarian, but the sad conviction of a soul in heavi-

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire, *SIECLE DE LOUIS XIV.*, ch. xxxvii.

ness. His work owes its immense interest to the fact that the inmost life of the author is revealed at every word, in the accents of profound truth. A sublime eloquence betrays by turns his doubts, his anguish, his scorn of himself and of reason, his religious terrors. It has been truly said that he wrote with his heart's blood. This man, who despised poetry as he despised philosophy and science, is a poet in spite of himself. What flashes of thought and sentiment constantly break through in all his writings! Whether it be that he is crushing man between the "two infinities," or that this "thinking reed" is rising nobly up beneath the overwhelming universe, or that Pascal himself, raising his eyes to heaven, is all at once "awe-struck at the eternal silence of infinite space," whatever it be, we recognise on every page the free and sincere striving of a great soul to reach its God; and with an anxiety full of terror, we follow the writer through all the long religious drama, the attractive force of which is only increased by its broken and enigmatic expression. "It is his soul which makes Pascal great as a man and as an author; the style which reflects this soul has all its qualities—delicacy, bitter irony, an ardent imagination, austere reason, and at the same moment emotion and chaste discretion. The style, like the soul, is of incomparable beauty."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Victor Cousin, *DES PENSÉES DE PASCAL*, Preface.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### LOUIS XIV. AND HIS COURT.

**Louis XIV. and Descartes.**—Corneille, Descartes, and Pascal, fill the first half of the seventeenth century. Notwithstanding the diversity which marks their genius, there were certain mental similarities between these great men. They possessed in common intellectual ardour, simplicity in greatness, and warmth of imagination, tempered by sublimity. We feel that there is a tendency to a grave and majestic harmony between the most illustrious representatives of French thought. But if there was a bond of unity between the great minds of the age, there was as yet no centre in the government. However, in the midst of the bloody frivolities of the Fronde, that man was growing up who was the first to give to France the chief object of her desire—that severe unity which makes her strength and her glory. Royalty—the material personification of a people—was then the only form under which the nation could see and understand herself, and Louis XIV. was the most glorious expression of royalty. His person seemed made for the part; his figure, his carriage, his beauty, his noble air, proclaimed the king; a natural majesty accompanied his every action and compelled respect. His shrewd sense supplied the defects of his education. He had especially

the instinct of power, a desire to rule, and that faith in himself so necessary for him who would command others. Thus he unhesitatingly took possession of all the active power of the nation. He adopted the age as his own. His maxim was in absolute opposition to that of vulgar tyrannies; in order to reign, he desired to unite. He gathered round the steps of his throne all that was brilliant or influential—nobility, science, genius, bravery, all came to shine as so many rays around his crown. The people, tired of civil war, attached themselves to the king as their defender: the bourgeoisie willingly gave their love to this master of their masters, who they knew, in the absence of other equality, would at least subject all alike to that of obedience.

Once more, as under Francis I., the aristocracy forsook their dull châteaux for the elegant domestic life of the Court, and this time their presence was not threatening for the royal power. Richelieu had broken their pride for ever, and the abortive reaction of the Fronde (a parliamentary revolution magnified by the nobles into an insurrection) had proved to them their powerlessness. From henceforth they could be nothing but with and by the king. They might become burdensome to France, they could never be dangerous to her.

We must look at the intellectual movement of the period from the point of view of the Court, and see it as a whole from the steps of the throne. The man who said, *L'état, c'est moi*, could also say, *I am the literature, the art, the thought of my time*. Not because the age had abdicated in favour of the personal tastes and opinions of the king; but because this king represented in the most striking manner, and in a brilliant personality, the opinions, the tastes, and the aspirations of the age.

This new royalty desired to develope in ease, and set

to work to make for itself a shrine. It forsook the Louvre (not, however, till it had set its mark upon it), and went to Versailles to display all its splendour. The Louvre was only a palace, enclosed and almost swallowed up by the great city of the people, where royalty still might think it heard the last murmurs of the insurrection which had outraged its childhood. A palace was not sufficient; it would have a town, and a town made and filled by itself alone. "Saint-Germain," remarks Saint-Simon, "offered to Louis a town, ready made, and kept up by its very position. He gave it up for Versailles, the most mournful and ungrateful of places, without a view, without wood, without water, without soil, inasmuch as all is marsh or quicksand. It pleased him to tyrannise over nature, and to tame her by the power of art and money." "This place is," as was wittily said by the Duc de Créquy, "a favourite without deserts, which will owe everything to its master, and for that very reason only please him the more."

Versailles is the symbolic work of the reign of Louis XIV., and reveals its mind, its greatness, and its cruel and outrageous egotism. The eastern façade, which looks towards Paris, is a vast and irregular heap of buildings, which quite overshadow the modest brick château of Louis XIII. Three courts of unequal size lead to the sanctuary where kingly majesty reposes. It is on the west side that Versailles is truly itself. An immense façade spreads out in perfect regularity; nothing breaks its cold uniformity, neither tower nor turret; nothing which recalls the old national architecture. A single block of buildings juts out in the middle of this long straight line,—there the master lives; the two wings retire, and keep at a respectful distance.

Jules Hardouin Mansard built this palace; Lebrun



peopled it with the creations of his brush, and cast all Olympus at the feet of the king of France. Mythology was no longer aught but a magnificent allegory, of which Louis XIV. was the reality. Vanquished nations were personified: England, Holland, Spain, Rome herself, humbly bent the knee, not to France, but to Louis.

A third artist, Le Nôtre, created a landscape for this palatial edifice. From the windows of his incomparable *Galerie de Glaces*, Louis could see nothing which was not himself. His whole horizon was his work, for his garden was his horizon. The shrubberies and straight avenues were only an indefinite prolongation of the palace, a vegetable architecture which reproduced and completed that of stone. The trees might not grow but by rule and square; the water, brought at enormous expense to this arid spot, might only flow in stiff designs. A thousand bronze and marble statues were the mythological pictures of this palace of verdure, and, like those of Lebrun, presented the apotheosis of the king and his amours.

France paid for the construction of Versailles a sum equivalent to £16,000,000 of our present money. The profuseness of peace was almost as fatal to the people as the ambitions of war. But the king could admire and contemplate himself in the ingenuousness of his egotism; he had created around himself a little universe of which he was the centre and the life. Himself was the model he proposed to artists; himself was the symbol which poets and writers all in some measure reproduced.<sup>1</sup>

Though Versailles was renovated by the last French king, it is still but a shadow of itself. To see it as it was, imagination must repeople it, and give back to it its

<sup>1</sup> See, on the Symbolism of Versailles, two chapters in the *FASTES DE VERSAILLES*, by H. Fortoul, and Martin's *HISTOIRE DE FRANCE*, vol. v., p. 105, *et seq.*

brilliant and gorgeous throngs and its splendid fêtes, as we read of them in Mme. de Sévigné. "What shall I say to you? Magnificence, illumination, all France, dresses faced and embroidered with gold, jewels, baskets of fire and of flowers, crush of carriages, screams in the street, lighted torches, the people pressed back and crushed under the wheels: in short, a very whirlwind; dissipation, unanswered questions, unwitting compliments; civilities without an idea to whom one is speaking; feet entangled in trains." Or we must see it in the transparent allusions of BÉRÉNICE.<sup>2</sup>

Louis was, in short, the soul of his court as of his palace. It was he who inspired women with grace and wit, men with valour and courtesy, and artists with emulation and almost with genius. He drew around him and distributed tastefully the brilliant society which belongs to him. Better known than Mansard, Lebrun, or Le Nôtre, he himself made his Versailles a living Versailles, replete with elegance and majesty.

It is easy to guess at the character of literature under such a monarch. Drawn into the royal sphere, it is certain to become a part of the vast monarchical whole. The proud independence of Pascal and Descartes will assuredly make way for that "*esprit de suite*" in which Corneille was deficient. "Whatever is too far removed from Lulli, Racine, or Lebrun is condemned," says La Bruyère.<sup>3</sup> Poetry will be pruned and lopped like the yews of the *Tapis Vert*: Boileau will continue Le Nôtre. The society of women, interminable conversations founded on nothing, intrigues of the heart, the science of passion and ridicule,—in a word, the court; how admirably adapted was such a school for bending and twisting genius to a mere dexterity in word-fencing!

<sup>2</sup> BÉRÉNICE, act i. sc. v., Racine.

<sup>3</sup> Chap. DES GRANDS.

Saint-Simon tells us that Louis XIV. never passed any woman, even the chamber-maids, whom he knew to be such, without lifting his hat. French poets too respected women, and, even when disparaging them, strove to please them. This respect was beneficial to the poets, and made the age of Louis XIV. an age of good taste.

Had the literature of this period been merely a reflection of the elegant manners of the court, it might have attracted the curiosity of the historian, but it could hardly have been worthy the study and admiration of the artist, and would have held in the annals of the human mind no higher place than the ephemeral poetry of the Troubadours. But happily it was exposed to two other influences, more decided though less easy of apprehension than that of royalty. First, the influence of Christianity, which had so permeated the nation in the Middle Ages that it had left in the minds of the people not beliefs only, but habits and propensities. The disputes of the Reformation had not really changed the French people. "There was not the slightest tendency, nor had there ever been, since the conversion of Henry of Navarre, to an increase in the Protestant numbers."<sup>4</sup> Protestantism was distinctly opposed to the logical and sympathetic character of the French people, in whom a greater, deeper change than any German Reformer had dreamt of was slowly but surely working. In the meantime Protestantism was "rejected by almost every important intellect in France," and "the Catholic faith had been provisionally adopted by almost all thinking men."<sup>5</sup> Under her influence the souls of men grew introspective, and examined themselves with heart-searching fear, as before the eyes of a just and jealous God. Thence proceeded that knowledge of human passions, that profound analysis of the heart, that sen-

<sup>4</sup> Bridges, Lect. iv.

<sup>5</sup> Idem.

sibility, which, from being unceasingly combated, asserted itself all the more vigorously, and made its presence all the more felt.

Further, the sixteenth century had discovered Greek and Roman antiquity; but, proud and glad of its conquest, had constituted itself its jailor rather than its master, watching jealously, like the dragon of the Hesperides, its golden apples. The age of Louis XIV., on the contrary, lightened its burden by eating, like old Æsop, the loaves which made it heavy. All that was true to nature in antiquity—regularity, wisdom, good sense, and good taste—it took possession of.

Under these different influences, a perfectly homogeneous literature—a majestic and immortal edifice—grew. At first sight we are struck by its unity, its fitness, its kingly dignity. Next in its fidelity to nature, its perfect justice, and the imperishable solidity of its materials, we recognise ancient tradition. And, lastly, the religious odour, the perfume of incense which meets us everywhere, reveals to us the presence of Christianity.

The harmonious blending of these discordant elements was the great business of the writers of that time, as the passionate disputes between the "*Anciens*" and the "*Modernes*,"—between Boisrobert, Desmarests, Perrault, and Lamotte on the one side, and Boileau, La Fontaine, and Mme. Dacier on the other,—testify.<sup>6</sup> The problem was resolved, however, not by discussion, but by masterpieces. "This period," says Hallam, "the second part of the seventeenth century, comprehends the most considerable, and in every sense the most important and distinguished, portion of what was once called the Great Age in France. . . . In this period literature was adorned by its most brilliant writers; since, notwithstanding the

<sup>6</sup> H. Rigault, *ŒUVRES COMPLÈTES*, vol. i.

genius and popularity of some who followed, we generally find a still higher place awarded by men of taste to Bossuet and Pascal than to Voltaire and Montesquieu. The language was written with a care that might have fettered the powers of ordinary men, but rendered those of such as we have mentioned more resplendent. The laws of taste and grammar, like those of nature, were held immutable; it was the province of human genius to deal with them, as it does with nature, by a skilful employment, not by a preposterous and ineffectual rebellion against their control. Purity and perspicuity, simplicity and ease, were conditions of good writing; it was never thought that an author, especially in prose, might transgress the recognised idiom of his mother-tongue, or invent words unknown to it, for the sake of effect or novelty; or if, in some rare occurrence, so bold a course might be forgiven, these exceptions were but as miracles in religion, which would cease to strike us, or be no miracles at all, but for the regularity of the laws to which they bear witness, even while they infringe them."<sup>7</sup>

**Madame de Sévigné.**—Perhaps the writer of that time most conspicuous by her graces of style and her freedom from affectation is Madame de Sévigné. It belonged to the domination of the court, that is, of the spirit of society, to elevate written conversation into a branch of literature, and to make a collection of letters one of the most striking works of the age. The preceding century had been especially remarkable for its *Memoirs*,—a sort of conversation between the author and posterity; the seventeenth century was not without them. We need do no more than mention the curious and unauthentic anecdotes of Guy-Patin, or *LES AMOURS DES GAULES*, the "scandalous chronicle" of Bussy-Rabutin,

<sup>7</sup> Hallam's *LITERATURE OF EUROPE*, part iv., chap. vii.

for which the author was condemned to imprisonment in the Bastille; and the better known Memoirs of Mme. de Motteville, Mlle. de Montpensier, and La Rochefoucauld. Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, eclipsed all his rivals by the animation of his style, his excellent portraiture of character, and became by his Memoirs the Sallust of the Insurrection of the Fronde, of which he had aspired to be the Catiline.

Under Louis XIV. conversation became an art. It was no longer discussion and dissertation, as in the days of Catherine de Vivonne; the most insignificant event, the vaguest rumour, was "a fine subject to argue and talk about endlessly. That is what we do night and day," writes Mme. de Sévigné, "morning and evening, without object, without end, and we hope that you do the same."<sup>8</sup> At this time every one wrote, and wrote well. Besides Madame de Sévigné, there was Ninon de l'Enclos, Mesdames de Montespan, de Coulanges, de la Sablière, and de Maintenon.

Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de Sévigné, was born in Burgundy in 1627. Left a widow at five-and-twenty, with a considerable fortune and of remarkable beauty, she devoted herself to her two children, and more especially to her daughter, who afterwards married the Marquis de Grignan, and who, going to live with him on his distant property near Aix, was the object to whom was addressed for seven-and-twenty years that inimitable correspondence which delights us now, and is as fresh and interesting as when it was first penned at Paris or Versailles. There is perhaps some monotony in the excessive affection displayed to her daughter, whom it is reported to have wearied; and she has been charged with a want of *sensibility* where others are concerned,—a reproach

<sup>8</sup> Sévigné, Let. 19, Dec. 1670.

to which her facetious account of Le Voisin's execution would seem to give colour.

She had been educated under the direction of her uncle, the Abbé de Coulanges, at the old abbey of Livry, where she had read much, and learned Spanish, Italian, and a little Latin. The taste for reading which she there acquired she always retained. We cannot but feel amused at the account of S. Augustine read through in twelve rainy days in the country. Religion and worldliness are left to agree as best they may in her conscience, while to her readers they seem to explain her own words to her daughter, "*une petite dévote qui ne vaut guère.*" But in later life, religious sentiments seem to have deepened under the fervent Christianity and apostolic words of Bossuet and Bourdaloue,—another striking feature of the society of that day.

We must not separate from Mme. de Sévigné her charming friend Mme. de la Fayette, the author of *ZAÏRE* and *LA PRINCESSE DE CLÈVES*. As Mademoiselle de la Vergne, she had been celebrated under the name of Laverna in the Latin verses of Ménage. Her novels were the first improvement on the old heroic romances. *ZAÏRE* is written in the Spanish style; but in the *PRINCESSE DE CLÈVES*, the authoress breaks loose from the spell of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and writes a probable story, naturally and unaffectedly. To it belongs the honour of having introduced a popular style of fiction. Though the scenes are laid a hundred years before, her characters act and speak like the courtiers of Versailles. Indeed, it is supposed that the story is intended to represent actual members of the court: the Duchess of Valentino is Mme. de Montespan; Marie Stuart, the Duchess of Orleans; the Prince of Clèves, M. de la Fayette; the Duke of Nemours, La Rochefoucauld.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AGE OF LOUIS XIV.—THE DRAMA AND POETRY.

**Racine.**—If the epistolary correspondence of the reign of Louis XIV. reproduced better than anything else the real and living types of human nature, it was for poetry to produce the idealised. By rare good fortune, there were at this time four poets,—Molière, Racine, Boileau, and La Fontaine,—three of whom shone at the court of Louis. They were friends too in the world; and their weekly dinners in the *Rue du Vieux Colombier* are well known. Their friendship has been celebrated by La Fontaine in his *AMOURS DE PSYCHÉ ET DE CUPIDON*, and to it we owe that unity of direction and object which makes their writings so especially indicative of the general spirit of their time. Let us now examine the peculiarities of the poetry of each.

In such an age we must not expect either the simple narration of the epic or the enthusiasm of the ode. But if there be a style of poetry which, to produce an effect, requires a numerous and brilliant gathering of people, and disposes its audience in such a way that they can be seen whilst they are listening; which, in its plot, exposes with seductive art the weaknesses of the human heart, and excuses and ennobles them by giving them *heroic names*; which, in a word, presents a flattering



mirror to a self-idolising society,—we cannot doubt but that such a poetry will be cultivated with success, and welcomed with rapturous applause.

It was such a poetry that Racine invented. His tragic muse was the child of that period ; it could hardly have lived and flourished in any other. He surrounded jealousy, ambition, and every shade of the passion of love with an aureole of poetry. He lived and thought with his age ; what he felt and what he saw inspired him ; and he gave back to society, in the most dazzling shape, the inspirations he had drawn from her. Tragedy is no longer, as with Corneille, a seductive heroism, it is heroic passion. The aim of the drama is no longer to excite admiration, but to draw tears. The poet does not raise us above ourselves, he turns us in upon ourselves, and art gains in truth what it has lost in loftiness. There are certain likenesses between Racine and Corneille : both seek the source of their power in the moral nature of man, and despise the mere material accidents of the stage ; they do not, like Shakspeare, idealise a reality, they make ideas incarnate by their pen.

“The female characters of Racine are of the greatest beauty ; they have the ideal grace and harmony of ancient sculpture, and bear somewhat of the same analogy to those of Shakspeare which that art does to painting. Andromache, Monimia, Iphigenia, we may add Junia, have a dignity and faultlessness neither unnatural nor insipid, because they are only the ennobling and purifying of human passions. They are the forms of possible excellence, not from individual models, nor likely, perhaps, to delight every reader, for the same reason that more eyes are pleased by Titian than by Raffaele.”<sup>1</sup>

The faults of Racine are the faults of the national taste

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *LITERATURE OF EUROPE*, vol. iv. chap. vi.

of his time, to which, as well as to the fact of his being a courtier, we may ascribe them.

His tragedies may be divided into three classes. Of the first are those whose subjects he borrowed from the ancient Greek stage, and suited to the requirements of the French theatre. Though behind his great model Euripides in depth of pathos and intensity of dramatic effect, he may yet well challenge comparison with him, and in *PHÈDRE*, the master-piece of this class, he may be held to have surpassed him.<sup>2</sup>

To the second class belong his historical tragedies, where the outline of historic truth is filled in with consummately beautiful poetry and a flow of dramatic sentiment. They are *BRITANNICUS* (1669), *BÉRÉNICE* (1670), *MITHRIDATE* (1673).

After the production of *PHÈDRE* in 1677, Racine retired from the stage. He had identified himself so completely with the Port-Royalists, that he could hardly consistently continue to promote an amusement which they so unhesitatingly and uncompromisingly denounced. Twelve years of silence, solitude, and study of the Scriptures, prepared him for his third class of tragedies, those drawn from Holy Writ. At the pressing invitation of Madame de Maintenon, he wrote *ESTHER* (1689) and *ATHALIE* (1690) for representation by the young lady students of Saint-Cyr. *ATHALIE*, though it was declared by Boileau to be a master-piece, and is generally allowed by modern critics to be his best work, was badly received, and his pity for the people drew on him the king's displeasure. Racine died, it is said, of the grief and disappointment this occasioned, though not till 1699, at the age of sixty, nine years after the production of the piece.

<sup>2</sup> The other tragedies of this class are *ANDROMAQUE* (1667) and *IPHIGÉNIE* (1674). *PHÈDRE* was produced in 1677.

**Molière.**—Whilst Racine was yet in his boyhood, another poet who was to rise to an eminence different indeed, but no less lofty than that to which we have represented the greatest French tragic poet as attaining, was roaming from province to province of France at the head of a company of strolling players. Jean Baptiste Poquelin de Molière,<sup>3</sup> drawn to the stage by an invincible attraction, had renounced his name and his family to wander for twelve years through the length and breadth of his country. Endowed naturally with a keen sense of the ridiculous, this wandering career opened to him life under manifold aspects, and furnished him with numberless traits of experience and satire. He had already been the author of several farces, and of the comedies, L'ÉTOURDI and LE DÉPIT AMOUREUX, when on his return to Paris in 1659, that centre of social movement developed to the full his powers, and by its appreciation of LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES, produced that year, encouraged the poet to write that long list of inimitable comedies to which death only put a stop. At the first representation of LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES, a spectator cried out, "*Courage, Molière, voilà la bonne comédie.*" The Hôtel de Rambouillet itself, made ashamed of its absurd imitators, applauded. Ménage, a conspicuous *alcôviste*, remarked to a companion as he came out of the theatre, "You and I have approved of all the follies we have just heard so sensibly and delicately criticised. . . . We must now burn what we have adored, and adore what we have burned." "And," he tells us later, "it all happened as I predicted." Thus Molière reformed at one stroke comedy and literary taste, dealing a blow at false taste from which it never recovered. "The good taste of the next age," says Hallam, "might be ascribed

<sup>3</sup> Born at Paris in 1622; died in the same city, 1673.

in great measure to his unmerciful exposure of affectation and pedantry."

If this piece had revealed Molière to the Parisian world, it had also revealed him to himself. "I need no longer study Plautus and Terence," he cried, "or search Menander for selections; I need only study the world." It was, however, hardly possible for him to find untrodden ground, but from henceforth his imitations, like those of the other great dramatists of his time, were but assimilations in which the creative genius of the borrower gives excellence and lustre to that which he borrows. He took details of situation and touches of dialogue from Aristophanes; from Plautus, *L'AVARE* and *L'AMPHYTRION*; from Terence, the rogueries of his valets, and the debates on marriage; from the Italians, his *Docteur* and his *Géronte*, from Spain, the details of his *PRINCESSE D'ELIDE* and *LE FESTIN DE PIERRE*. But, as we have said, the really inexhaustible mine from which he dug his treasures was, as he told himself, the world. In society, he was generally seen plunged in silent reverie. His friend Boileau used to call him *Le Contemplateur*. He says of him, "*Elomire* (anagram of Molière) did not say a single word. . . . He kept his eyes fixed on three or four persons of quality who were bargaining over some lace; he appeared attentive to what they were saying, and it seemed, by the movement of his eyes, as if he were looking into the very depth of their souls to see there what they left unsaid."<sup>6</sup>

He left no position untried by his philosophic investigation. None was too high for his courage, or too low for his contempt. It is singular that the same things,

<sup>4</sup> HISTORY OF LITERATURE, vol. iv. chap. vi.

<sup>5</sup> ZÉLINDE, a comedy by Villiers, quoted by Sainte-Beuve, art. Molière.

the court, classic antiquity, and religion, which inspired the chaste melodies of Racine, touched the chords of the lyre of the comic Molière. The secret of it is that they both drew pictures of the society of their day. Racine was appealed to by all that was noble, elevated, and generous; Molière was keenly alive to the vices and follies of mankind. The Court offered to them both that which made its charm and its power: woman. Racine made her passions divine, Molière attacked her faults; each in his different way paid her homage. Molière, by his *PRÉCIEUSES* and his *FEMMES SAVANTES*, tore from her the mask of pedantry which concealed the native graces of her mind. He proclaimed war against her petty rivalries, and her covert ill-nature. He painted her coquetry to the life. What can be compared to *Celimène*, with whom even the rough misanthrope falls in love! What universal truth in the picture, and yet how distinctly French in character! The poets of the North have invested the passion of women with tenderness and melancholy; those of the South, with all the warmth and gaiety of their own sunny clime; but neither have so faithfully portrayed as Molière the winning imperfections of her versatile nature. We feel that Molière criticises her lovingly. He defends her dignity in *L'ÉCOLE DES MARIS*, and *L'ÉCOLE DES FEMMES*; he attacks the Jewish and Roman notions of her inferiority and subjection; he blames, in the name of justice and domestic happiness, the exaggerated reaction from the maxims of chivalry, and makes the tyranny of men impossible by making it ridiculous. And further, no poet has better felt or expressed all the infinite shades of love; it would be easy to quote lines of his which might have excited the jealousy of Racine.

The Court was to him a no less inexhaustible treasure-

house. A marquis is the favourite aim for the shafts of his satire.<sup>6</sup> He says himself<sup>7</sup> that a "*marquis ridicule qui divertisse la compagnie*," has in his time taken the place of the servant of ancient comedy. He delights to describe such "arriving at the king's chamber with that air called *le bel air*, combing their wig, and humming a little song between their teeth,—la, la, la, la Stand back, you ordinary people, for room is wanted for two marquises; and they are not people whose persons can be contained in a narrow space."<sup>8</sup>

The plebeian instinct of the paper-hanger's son found an illustrious ally in the natural arrogance of the king: both were entirely at one in their desire to establish equality at the foot of the throne. The nobles easily forgave the poet, for no one would recognise himself in the unflattering portraits which he persuaded himself were intended to humble some neighbour. "I think, marquis, it is you he takes off in *LA CRITIQUE*.' 'Me? Why! I'm your valet; for it's you *in propria personâ*.'"<sup>9</sup> Besides which there was always, in each play, one worthy courtier, which was a refuge for self-love; and the poet satisfied the court by attacking provincial society, and consoled the nobles by hitting insolent *parvenus* harder than themselves. *LA COMTESSE D'ESCARBAGNAS* atoned for *L'IMPROMPTU DE VERSAILLES*, and *LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME* healed the wounds *LES FÂCHEUX* had made.

*LE MISANTHROPE* appeared in 1666, *TARTUFE* in the following year. The latter is generally considered his master-piece. It has been objected that the sentiments appealed to in it are too deep and serious for comedy, and

<sup>6</sup> *Vide* REMERCIMENT AU ROI, 1663.

<sup>7</sup> *L'IMPROMPTU DE VERSAILLES*, scene iii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* scene iii.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* scene \.

that religion itself is made ridiculous. To this we would answer, that it is not reality and sincerity in religion which Molière attacks, but unreality and hypocrisy, and that such vices are legitimate objects of moral satire. There were plenty of Tartufes in the Paris of Molière's day, and the piece is but another campaign of that war Pascal had waged eleven years before. The mode of warfare and plan of attack of the two men were indeed diverse; and Pascal in his cloister fought as a fervent Catholic, whilst Molière, a pupil of Gassendi, came into the field an unbiassed philosopher; yet the powers of both were directed unconsciously to the same end, that of stripping the irreligious and hypocritical of their assumed garb of holiness.

Molière's glory is that he was the poet of human nature. He was the first of his age to attack with that weapon most terrible of all to Frenchmen—ridicule—the follies of his day, and his personifications of vice and weakness are true for all time, types of which every age will furnish antitypes.

Boileau replied to Louis XIV.'s question who was the greatest poet of the age? "*C'est Molière,*" and the admiration of succeeding generations has gone far to endorse this opinion. His countrymen claim for him the first place amongst comic poets, and there is little doubt that he outdid his model Plautus, and at least disputes the pre-eminence with Terence.

**Boileau.**—Boileau, whom we have just mentioned deciding for the king on the comparative merits of rival poets, set himself the task of guiding public taste generally. Before he rose up to judge with his critical good sense between bad and good, Scudéry had been admired by the side of Corneille, and Voiture by that of Malherbe. The end of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's long life

of ninety years was embittered by the merciless satire of Boileau; nor did he hesitate to assail with bitter irony the reputation of the most popular poets and dramatists. He knew no mercy, and gave no quarter. A lonely and self-contained childhood had developed to the utmost his natural disposition to raillery and satire, and crushed any latent tenderness and sensibility he may have had. The want of these two last very essential qualities is conspicuous in his poetry. We seek in vain for some touch of pathos, some note of wailing pity for his victims. His mind is just rather than broad, wise rather than deep. The child of his age, he was without any love of nature. He saw nothing in mythology but a system of abstract allegories, and failed to recognise in it that pantheism of universal life which is the soul of Greek poetry. He comprehended as little the poetic grandeur of Catholicism, and like his contemporaries dreamt not of the spirit which animated the Middle Ages, and so despised the old national poetry of France. This was perhaps necessary, for progress can only be made at such a cost; new ideas can only spring up on the negation of old ones. Descartes, as we have seen, rejected all learning, that he might start untrammelled on his search.

Boileau's career as a poet may be divided into three periods. In the first, from 1660 to 1668, the young satirist, with all the impetuosity of his age, proclaimed war to the death against all bad poets and the false taste imported from Spain and Italy. This was the period of his nine SATIRES, which "belong," as Voltaire remarks, "to this great artist's first style, which is inferior, it is true, to his second, but superior to that of every other writer of his time, if we except Racine."

In the *second* (1669-1677), Boileau lets his satire rest awhile. He has overturned, he must now reconstruct.



In the *ART POÉTIQUE* (1674) he formulates the doctrine he has made prevail. The same year he published the first four cantos of the *LUTRIN*,—a masterpiece of versification, in which once again he delights us with his poignant wit and satire,—and his first nine *EPISTLES*, the last and best of which is addressed to Racine.

After the publication of the ninth *EPISTLE*, Boileau, in company with Racine, was named historiographer to the King, an office which interrupted his poetic labours for nineteen years. At the end of that time, in 1693, he again came before the public with his *ODE À NAMUR*, an unsuccessful attempt, for which perhaps the best excuse is that the French language is ill fitted for the higher kind of lyric poetry. He also wrote three more *SATIRES* and three more *EPISTLES*, and then his muse, fearing perhaps to sing some song still more unworthy of her earlier reputation, became for ever silent. Boileau died in 1711, at the age of seventy-five.<sup>1</sup>

**La Fontaine.**—The fourth poet of the friendly reunions of the Rue du Vieux-Colombier, was Jean de la Fontaine.<sup>2</sup> It seems as if with him all the elements of the past were fused in the crucible of modern thought—the sixteenth century, the Middle Ages, and classical antiquity—as if he united once again the chain of French tradition which the brilliant but scornful literature of the seventeenth century had broken. More than this, at a time when poetry was, so to speak, *Cartesian*, and discerned in the universe only the moral nature of man, La Fontaine sympathised with all creation. All that lives and grows, tree, bird, or flower, had for him a sentiment and a language. He loved the ray of sunlight which

<sup>1</sup> It is evident from the title of Boileau's works that he challenged comparison with Horace, but the comparison is obviously to the disadvantage of the more modern poet.

<sup>2</sup> Born at Château-Thierry, 1621; died 1695.

seemed as a fringe to the "scarf of Iris;" he rejoiced in remarking the "least little breeze which wrinkles the face of the water." Universal life, hidden from the unloving and unheeding eyes of his friends, awoke for him with all the grace of ancient mythology and the deep truth of modern poetry. La Fontaine, the most simple and the least pretentious of French poets, is yet the only one who links the seventeenth century to both the past and the future.

He had attained his twenty-second year before giving the least indication of his poetic bent. An ode of Malherbe, which he once heard read, awoke in him the sentiment of rhythm. From that moment began his education as a poet. It was carried on without forcing or ambition. La Fontaine studied while he thought he was only amusing himself. He read the old authors which in those days were the foundation of a provincial library, —Rabelais, Marot, Voiture, d'Urfé; and the poets which are the glory of Italy, Greece, and Rome.

The familiar friend of Fouquet, and a constant visitor at his house, La Fontaine hardly troubled himself to do more than sing occasionally light, jesting songs, till the disgrace of his host wrung from his inmost soul a touching, plaintive cry, *L'ÉLÉGIE AUX NYMPHES DE VAUX*.

In 1665, appeared the first collection of his *CONTES ET NOUVELLES*, which reveal to us a side of the society of the reign of Louis XIV. which literature had not hitherto unveiled. They are the poetry of the society of which the Memoirs of Dangeau and the Princess Palatine were the history, and were written to gratify Marie-Anne Mancini, Duchess of Bouillon, niece of Mazarin. In this society good taste was the only limit to licence—the poet might say anything, provided he said it with *esprit*.

Fortunately, these *TALES* are not the only work by which La Fontaine's name is known. His *FABLES* are

better written, and entitle him, by their grace, poetry, and humour, to take place in the first rank of fabulists. He pretends to no originality, but in his title-page modestly claims to have done nothing more than put the ancient fables he had collected into verse. His charm is in his way of narrating, and his love for, and sympathy with, the country. His pen invests even the wide and unlovely plains of the north and west of France with a tender grace; the vast corn fields where the master walks in the broad sunshine, and the lark hides its lowly nest; the heath and the underwood, where whole worlds of tiny creatures fly and crawl, and creep and spin, in ceaseless activity; the sandy warrens, whose frolicsome denizens "pay court to morning amongst the thyme and the dew;" all these pictures, faithful and true, are such as nothing but a study of nature herself could have taught him to make.

Unfortunately, his *TALES* are a truer indication of his own life. He was so profligate that he seems hardly to have seen any odiousness in vice. He seriously contemplated dedicating one of his most shameless stories to the saintly Arnauld, and offered his confessor for the use of the poor the profits arising from an edition of his *CONTES*. Two women at different periods of his life tried to save him from himself, by taking him to live in their homes; but he left them to return to his evil courses. The King refused to notice him because of the reputation he bore; and the same cause made his *quondam* friend Boileau silent in his praise. Fénelon was less inexorable, and wrote, and gave to his royal pupil to translate a Latin eulogy of the fabulist.

**Minor Poets.**—Below the four great names which represent the poetry of the age of Louis XIV. are a host of *minor poets*, the more distinguished of whom we will just mention. In tragedy, Thomas Corneille, the younger

brother of the great dramatist, whose *ARIANE* perhaps, at a great interval, came next after the plays of his brother and Racine; La Fosse, author of *MANLIUS*, the fame of which has been more lasting, and which is preferred by many—La Harpe amongst others—to *ARIANE*; Campistron, Duché, and Quinault, whose operas made for him a reputation, and have outlived the music of his coadjutor, Lulli.

The imitators of Molière were more successful. Racine once attempted comedy in *LES PLAIDEURS* (copied from the *WASPS* of Aristophanes), which, though witty and sarcastic, did not meet with sufficient success to persuade its author to a second attempt.

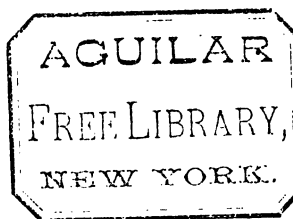
Brueys was in early life a Huguenot, but converted to Catholicism by Bossuet, against whom he had ventured to enter the arena of theological discussion, he took orders, and in the solitude of his ecclesiastical life amused himself with writing comedies, assisted by, or possibly under the name of, one Palaprat. He or they put the old and excellent farce of *PALETIN* in a new dress upon the French stage, and borrowed the plot of *LE MUET* from Terence.

Baron, known as the Jesuit La Rue, likewise closely copied Terence in *L'ANDRIENNE*.

Quinault and Campistron were more successful in comedy than in tragedy; indeed *LA MÈRE COQUETTE* of the former is not without much merit. Boursault, who also had attempted tragedy and failed, found himself able to amuse in his comedies *ÉSOPE À LA VILLE*, *ÉSOPE À LA COUR*, and more especially in *LE MERCURE GALANT*. Dufresny had no natural turn for comedy. Few of Dancourt's pieces, though he filled twelve volumes, have survived; but he has been praised by Voltaire, and notwithstanding La Harpe's contempt, his *CHEVALIER À LA MODE* is well-written, humorous, and spirited.

Next to Molière of French comedians stands the *spirituel*, the blithe, the joyous Regnard. *LE JOUEUR*, *LE LÉGATAIRE*, and *LES MÉNECHMES* are not unfit companions for *LE MISANTHROPE*. "The situations of Regnard are less powerful, but more comic; his principal characteristics are a sustained gaiety, and an inexhaustible fund of numerous and diverting sallies."<sup>3</sup> Somebody remarked one day that Regnard was a writer of mediocrity. "There is no mediocrity in his gaiety," retorted Boileau.

<sup>3</sup> La Harpe, "COURS DE LITTÉRATURE," vol. iv. p. 107.



CHAPTER XV.

AGE OF LOUIS XIV.—PHILOSOPHY AND  
ORATORY.

**Malebranche.**—We have already pointed out two of the ways in which literature has reproduced the society of the reign of Louis XIV. Memoirs, and more especially letters, trace its real portrait; poetry, its ideal. We must show how philosophers and Christian orators reveal its principles. The writers we have already discussed tell us—the one class what their age did, the other what it dreamed; those which we have yet to consider must tell us what it believed. The great reign is a majestic tree whose branches and flowers we have already examined, it only remains to us to study its roots.

The shade of Descartes broods over the whole century. His thought lives in its poetry, his method triumphs in its learning. Even men of the world make his doctrines the fashion; talk, in the most frivolous society, is of metaphysics, and grows excited on the subject of vortices. It cannot be, however, that Descartes should have been unreservedly admitted by an age in which Catholic tradition was so powerful. His works were put provisionally (*donec corrigarentur*) on the Roman Index. Louis XIV., too, in a fashion put his memory on the Index. When the philosopher's remains were brought from Sweden in 1667, the burial solemnities were postponed, and the King,

the protector of arts and letters, forbade the funeral oration of the greatest genius and thinker of France to be pronounced.

The Cartesianism of the reign of Louis XIV. was of a religious and practical turn, and Malebranche was its high priest. Of ardent mind, strong imagination, and lively wit, strict in his morals, and fervid in his piety, he was a warm admirer of Descartes, though in many points he differed from him.

He published his *RECHERCHE DE LA VÉRITÉ* in 1674. In this he advanced his hypothesis that "we see all things in God," which Locke professed himself unable to understand. The work is in six books; its style is admirable. The religious mysticism of the author, and his enthusiastic confidence in supernatural illumination, is perhaps its most distinctive feature. Malebranche forms, as it were, a sort of link between Plato (his Platonism derived not at first hand so much as from S. Augustine) and Descartes. He is at war with the practical Aristotle and all his disciples. Brown has remarked upon the evident influence of S. Augustine upon Malebranche, who is also obviously tinctured with scholastic theology.<sup>1</sup>

**Bossuet.**—But it was left for another than Malebranche to press successfully on others the claims of the Catholic faith; for another to convert by his *EXPOSITION DE LA FOI CATHOLIQUE*, the last eminent Protestant remaining in France;<sup>2</sup> for another to awaken in the heart of the King and the butterflies of his court some serious thoughts of religion. Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, born at Dijon, September 27, 1627, preached at the age of 34.

<sup>1</sup> The other works of Malebranche are, *CONVERSATIONS CHRÉTIENNES*; *MÉDITATIONS CHRÉTIENNES ET MÉTAPHYSIQUES*; *ENTRETIEN SUR LA MÉTAPHYSIQUE ET LA RELIGION*; *TRAITÉ DE MORALE*; *TRAITÉ DE L'AMOUR DE DIEU*. He lived 1631—1715.

<sup>2</sup> Turenne.

his first sermon before the King in the Chapel of the Louvre. Louis, touched and delighted, wrote with an effusion unusual in his reserved nature, to congratulate the father on having such a son. For ten years all Paris flocked to hear Bossuet preach—the Court, the *bourgeoisie*; the two Queens came out of their palace to listen to him; the recluses of Port Royal left their solitude; Turenne, Condé, all the great men of France, swelled the crowd.

The importance and influence of the Christian tribune was much increased by the silence at that time of political discussion. Standing as it did alone, its loud voice was heard above the murmured unison of admiration. The noble presence of Bossuet contributed to his success. His glance was mild but piercing; his voice seemed to proceed from an impassioned soul; his gestures were modest, quiet, and natural—everything about him spoke before he opened his mouth.<sup>3</sup> He rarely prepared his sermon *in extenso*, even before the most illustrious audiences; he came with a simple sketch, and abandoned himself like the orators of antiquity to the force of his convictions and the all-powerful pressure of his thought. Therefore his written SERMONS which remain to us—the work of his early years long forgotten, unknown to his closest friends, mutilated by editors—can give us but a very imperfect idea of the burning eloquence which poured in a flood from his lips. But yet what character in this cooled lava! His sermons are full of dogma; their main outline is Holy Writ. We seem to be listening to the old prophets and the fathers of the Church. Here David reminds a voluptuous audience, wholly given up to the pursuit of glory and pleasure, of death. “I have said ye are gods, and ye are all children of the Most High; but O gods of flesh and blood, O gods of dust and ashes, ye

<sup>3</sup> MÉMOIRES ET JOURNAL of the Abbé Ledieu, Bossuet's Secretary.



shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes, *verumtamen sicut homines moriemini!*" There, Tertullian describes, "that vain and ambitious woman, who carries in her ornaments the subsistence of countless families, and wears in a little string round her neck whole patrimonies: *Saltus et insulas tenera cervice circumfert.*" But it is Bossuet who adds that man who labours to heap up riches and honours "never thinks of measuring his coffin, which only, nevertheless, measures him accurately." Such touches, in exhaustless abundance, explain the deep impression he made, and the long applause which, notwithstanding the sanctity of the place, invariably followed his sermons.

Circumstances soon opened to Bossuet a field where he was on more congenial ground. Funeral orations, calling him as they did beside the graves of the great ones of the earth, gave this noble scorner of human glory the opportunity of "raising to heaven the magnificent testimony of our nothingness." At the same time they drew from his inmost soul those floods of tender compassion that discover the man in the apostle, and, like the ancient drama, link in indissoluble union pity and terror. Funeral orations had existed before Bossuet. Indeed, in his own day, there was Mascaron, clever and learned, but deficient in sensibility and natural eloquence; and Fléchier, graceful, harmonious, and dignified: "but in that style of eloquence which the ancients call demonstration, or rather descriptive (*ἐπιδεικτικὸς*), the style of panegyric or commemoration, they (the funeral orations of Bossuet) are doubtless superior to those justly celebrated productions of Thucydides and Plato that have descended to us from Greece; nor has Bossuet been equalled by any later writer."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Hallam, LITERATURE OF EUROPE. vol. iv. ch. vi.

His orations are to posterity like the pages of an imposing history, each one seeming a part of a vast whole, in which the great events and illustrious personages of the period appear one by one in the lugubrious light of the solemnities of the tomb. First we see the English Revolution—a tottering throne, an august head falling beneath the executioner's axe, and those queens whose "eyes held so many tears."<sup>5</sup> Then the royal palace of France is troubled in its turn: "Suddenly, like a thunder-clap, the fearful news resounds—"Madame is dying! Madame is dead!" (1670). Next comes the pious and gentle wife of Louis XIV. (1683): round about her reigns a sad and holy calm, but even here, in magnificent contrast, we can hear in the dim distance the hoarse murmur of the military glory of her royal spouse. Then appear the courtiers, equal at last to their masters; a princess, Anne de Gonzague (1686); a minister, Letellier (1686); and, to close the roll, the greatest captain of his age, the friend of Bossuet, the Prince de Condé (1687). For him the orator, whom age is overtaking, rises to a great height of warlike enthusiasm. He follows him to the plains of Fribourg and Rocroy; he describes the campaign with the minuteness of an old soldier; he seems intoxicated with the smell of powder and the smoke of glory. But he only decks the victim that he may be a more worthy offering to his God. Here is, perhaps, the most sublime of his many contrasts between the ephemeral greatness of this world and the eternal greatness of that to come. Here, too, Bossuet displays most touchingly his tenderness of soul, when in company with "a people in mourning, with princes and princesses, the noble offspring of so many kings, lights of France, darkened to-day and covered with their grief as with a veil," he goes himself with his silver-

<sup>5</sup> ORATION ON THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND, 1689.

ing hair and his failing voice to bid a last adieu to the ashes of his illustrious friend.

However holy may have been the lessons Bossuet inculcated in these orations, we cannot deny that he split on the shoal which seems inevitable to that particular kind of eloquence—that of sacrificing truth to panegyric. An orator is easily led into raising the subject of his oratory into an ideal hero, and it must be admitted that Bossuet's adulation is often excessive.

THE DISCOURS SUR L'HISTOIRE UNIVERSELLE, which may be called the philosophy of history, is the greatest effort of his marvellous genius. It is a true epopee in which none of the splendours of the ancient epic poetry are wanting; unity of action, absorbing interest, the wonderful intervention of a Divine hand, language at once nervous, brilliant, and sublime—all is there. The centuries press upon each other, thrones and empires fall with a horrible crash, and in the midst of this mutability of human institutions rises "the empire of the Son of Man, to which alone eternity is promised." The truth of Bossuet's conception may be disputed; there can be no question as to its magnificence. He looks upon the pomps and splendours of the world from the lofty peak of Sinai. He had formed the plan of this great work in his youth, and had patiently gathered together his materials. He began to give them shape when he was appointed tutor to the Dauphin, and in 1679 the book appeared. His first idea had been merely to give an abridgement of ancient history for the use of his pupil. By the advice of his friends, the purely historical part became the introduction. The book proper is divided into two parts, so we have the annals of the world three times told. His conception of Greece, Rome, and Carthage is profound and magnificent. Endowed in an eminent degree with the historic sense,

and carried away by his sympathy with what is great, the prelate of the seventeenth century, the author of the *POLITIQUE SACRÉE*, is republican with the Roman senate, and, keenly appreciative of its wisdom, its firmness, and its heroism, almost forgives it for being Pagan.

To Frenchmen of the present day the name of Bossuet is a synonym for eloquence; we marvel that it was not so with the great orator's contemporaries. All their praises are for Bourdaloue: Madame de Sévigné, a faithful echo of the opinions of good society, never tires of lauding his sermons, and hardly mentions the *ORAISONS FUNÈBRES*. It may have been that his hearers never paused to analyse the emotions his preaching aroused, and ascribed them solely to the doctrines he enunciated. He was the acknowledged champion of the Catholic faith; he stood in his stern orthodoxy between the rival Jesuits and Jansenists. By setting Protestants against Protestants, and exposing their inconsistencies,<sup>4</sup> he endeavoured to win back to the Church of which he was a bishop the nations she had lost. In point of fact, as we have already said, his *EXPOSITION DE LA FOI CATHOLIQUE* converted Turenne; his conference with the able Protestant controversialist Claude did as much for the lady in whose presence it was carried on.<sup>5</sup>

**Fénelon.**—His last battle for the faith must, we cannot but believe, have occasioned him pain for which his victory could not compensate, inasmuch as his adversary was his admiring friend Fénelon. These two men were the most conspicuous luminaries of the French Church. There was an extraordinary analogy in their careers, which were contemporaneous: both men were of precocious genius; both theologians, philosophers, orators, authors;

<sup>4</sup> *HISTOIRE DES VARIATIONS* (1688). *Négociations avec Leibnitz.*

<sup>5</sup> *Mademoiselle de Duras.*

both bishops; both tutors of princes; both inmates of the palace. This similarity of outward circumstances only makes the contrast in their characters, dispositions, and opinions the more striking. In religion, politics, and literature, they have only in common the superiority of their intellect and the excellence of their works.

Bossuet and Fénelon were two opposing principles rather than two rival theologians; and their opposition, which harassed themselves and grieved their contemporaries, seen in the perspective of history, is but another evidence of the intellectual wealth of the "*grand siècle*."

Bossuet was the representative of tradition, of the majestic immobility of doctrine. He seized in his powerful arms all the past of Christianity, to oppose it to the terrible movement which was carrying away the present. Hence his greatness, his sublimity, his occasional harshness. He is a dogma rather than a man, and a dogma which knows itself to be heaven-born, which believes in itself and in its right to reign.

Fénelon was the apostle of interior inspiration. Though obedient to the voice of the Church, there are certain truths which he contemplates in the sanctuary of his own conscience. He knows that "light must not be sought outside ourselves, but is to be found within ourselves." Observe, this inward revelation is not the dream of a mystic. The voice for which Fénelon listens is not for the privileged few, "it is common to all men, above all; it is perfect, eternal, immutable, always ready to speak in all places, and to help man in every corner of the universe." It only remains to give it its sacred name, and to bow down before it. Fénelon does not stop half way: "Where is this supreme reason?" he cries; "is it not the God I seek?"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> DE L'EXISTENCE DE DIEU.

Bossuet's sensibility seems to be swallowed up by his greatness. Love is the very soul of Fénelon, the principle of his life, the fire that kindles his genius. Love is the secret of the persuasiveness of his *LETTRES SPIRITUELLES*, as it had been of his sermons. Bossuet impressed his hearers by his terrible notes of warning, Fénelon won them by the "mild heat of holy oratory."

Such metaphysical difference did not fail to show itself in outspoken controversy. These two great churchmen met as adversaries, and it cannot be denied that Bossuet's treatment of Fénelon was harsh and severe. Still, there is no reason to doubt his motives; uncompromising justice was natural to such a character as his, and where he judged orthodoxy to be assailed, no tender-heartedness would silence his condemning voice. Even "his theory of government (in his *POLITIQUE SACRÉE*) did not include toleration."<sup>7</sup> It was then hardly likely that at a time when he was dreading almost nervously the dangers to which the faith was exposed from the spread of philosophy, he should hesitate in seeking the condemnation of a book,<sup>8</sup> even though the work of a friend, which seemed to him to attack that orthodoxy the defence of which was the object of his life. In fact, the battle between Bossuet and Fénelon was a battle between doctrines, and the former dreaded mysticism or quietism as he did philosophy. Fénelon, with characteristic sweetness and humility, bowed before the decrees of Rome, and, as much as a man may do, relinquished his personal convictions. The king, incited by Bossuet, had taken an active part in procuring the condemnation of the *MAXIMES DES SAINTS*, and that with motives less pure than Bossuet's. As D'Alembert

<sup>7</sup> Bridges.

<sup>8</sup> Fénelon's "*MAXIMES DES SAINTS*," condemned by Bossuet's influence at Rome.

remarks in his *ÉLOGE DE FÉNELON*, "the great heresy of the Archbishop of Cambray was in politics, and not in theology." Louis was really no friend of Fénelon's, whom he called "*le plus bel esprit et le plus chimérique*" of his kingdom; the author of the *POLITIQUE SACRÉE* was more congenial and acceptable to an absolute sovereign than the author of the *LETTER TO THE KING* (1704), of the *MÉMOIRES PARTICULIÈRES*, and of the *DIRECTIONS POUR LA CONSCIENCE D'UN ROY*.

Of all Fénelon's works, the greatest, perhaps, was the education of the Duke of Burgundy. For him most of his books which had not a distinctly religious purpose were written,—his *FABLES*, his *DIALOGUES*, *LES AVENTURES DE TÉLÉMAQUE*, and *LES AVENTURES DE ARISTONOUS*.

The education of the Grand-Dauphin is a sublime monologue in which Bossuet speaks; that of the Duke of Burgundy is a dialogue full of interest, in which the genius of the master (who was in sooth more fortunate in his pupil than Bossuet) is only unfolded step by step with the progress of his scholar. The indulgent educational theory of Fénelon is explained to us by himself in his *TRAITÉ DE L'ÉDUCATION DES FILLES*. From first to last his method is love, an entirely novel one in those days, when the parental severity which he censures was imitated by teachers in the school-room. Thus he may be said to have originated a new system, and to have been so far a real benefactor to the cause of education; but in the present day we shall not be able to agree with him in the narrow compass within which he would confine the intellectual development of women, saying that they "ought to shrink from science with almost as much delicacy as from vice."

From his early youth he had felt the powerful attrac-

tion of the genius of Greece, which later was to inspire *TÉLÉMAQUE*. The graceful fables of its mythology, which Bossuet had so unsparingly condemned in the poet Santeuil, did not frighten the broader, though less lofty, mind of Fénelon. Art he always treated with indulgence. Often at Versailles he went to Mignard's studio to "talk painting" with him. He thought that girls would be less likely to indulge in extravagances of dress if they studied the "noble simplicity" of costume in ancient works of art. He did not proscribe the theatre, which had been so uncompromisingly denounced by *Messieurs de Port-Royal*. It was his exquisite taste which led him in his admiration beyond the Romans, at whom Corneille, Boileau, and many others had stopped, to the Greeks themselves; and, amongst them, to the simplest and purest, Homer, Xenophon, Plato. His *TÉLÉMAQUE* shows how deeply he had entered into the spirit of the first of the three. This work, which only wants metre to be an epic poem, was written to help in the formation of the character of his pupil, and its beauties are not unworthy of this most noble object. The faults of the hero are the faults of the Duke of Burgundy, whom Fénelon believed would one day be called to rule over France. Every virtue that can attract, every vice that can repel, was ranged by Fénelon, as in a portrait gallery, under the eyes of his illustrious pupil, and the whole was framed in so rich an imagery and so noble and harmonious a diction that it could hardly fail to interest and impress.

This work completes our sketch of Fénelon, as *L'HISTOIRE UNIVERSELLE* does that of Bossuet. These two great epics, as we may almost venture to call them, have very different birthplaces. That of the latter is on the bare but terribly majestic mountain tops of Horeb and of Sinai, whence it flows through history, reflecting on its



bosom the ruin of empire after empire: the other bursts into life in the midst of the smiling, myrtle-clothed valley of the Ilissus, and winds along, now past temples of purest Parian, now past the sheltered homes of Grecian shepherds, and gives back on its glowing surface the bright forms of the nymphs and dryads that bask upon its banks.

The HISTOIRE UNIVERSELLE is exclusively Christian; TÉLÉMAQUE, Pagan in form, Christian in morals, and philosophic in politics, takes note of and sums up every bygone conquest of civilisation.

**Bourdaloue and Massillon.**—We have said that both Fénelon and Bossuet, the latter more especially, had shed a great lustre on the Christian pulpit, and that the best of their sermons, preached from notes only in the maturity of their genius, have not come down to us. This is not the case with the two other great preachers of the reign of Louis XIV., Massillon and Bourdaloue.

Bourdaloue (1633–1704) was a Jesuit, Massillon (1667–1743) an Oratorian; yet it was the former who was simple, practical, and austere; the latter who was ornate, persuasive, and insinuating. “Bourdaloue,” says Villemain,<sup>9</sup> “made of evangelical eloquence a regular and profound art.” Goujet calls him “the prince of preachers.” His contemporaries were ardent admirers of his nervous eloquence. The king heard his course ten successive Lenten sermons; his sermons were the talk of the Court; and this popularity he did not purchase by winking at vice. Far from this, he rebuked with all the boldness of an apostle, and “he was forcible enough,” says Madame de Sevigné, “to make courtesans tremble.”<sup>1</sup>

He preached on *Impurity* before the adulterous lover

<sup>9</sup> DISCOURS D'OUVERTURE DU COURS D'ÉLOQUENCE FRANÇAISE, 1822.

<sup>1</sup> 1674.

of Madame de Montespan.<sup>2</sup> He was not less bold on social subjects. His courtly hearers listened all the more willingly that they did not feel drawn to follow his advice. They heard his noble but cold deductions as they would have done a geometrical theorem, the existence of which hindered not in the very least the extravagations of self-will. "He is very capable of convincing," remarks Fénelon in his *DIALOGUE SUR L'ELOQUENCE*, "but I know no preacher who persuades and touches less. . . . His arguments require a conflict of the mind." This mental effort which Bourdaloue would exact of his hearers sometimes possessed an almost dramatic interest. "He has often taken away my breath," again writes Madame de Sevigné of him,<sup>3</sup> "by the extreme attention to which the force and justice of his discourses obliged me; and I did not breathe again till it pleased him to leave off, that he might begin another of equal beauty." His appearance seemed to conspire with the severe impassibility of his composition. His countenance was unmoved, his eyes closed, his pronunciation rapid, his voice monotonous, his inflexions unvaried. Every word was written; and so condensed and plain was the reasoning that there was no space in the closely linked chain for the flowers of rhetoric or the brilliant fancies of improvisation.

Massillon also recited his sermons, but he did so with a charming grace. The actor Baron, attracted by his reputation, went to hear him, and exclaimed as he came out, "He is a real orator, and we are only comedians." When Massillon appeared in the pulpit he seemed deeply penetrated with the great truths he was about to utter;

<sup>2</sup> Madame de Sevigné's words would lose by translation: "*Frap-pant comme un sourd, disant des vérités à bride abattue, parlant à tort et à travers contre l'adultère; sauve qui peut, il va toujours son chemin.*"

<sup>3</sup> 1686.

his downcast eyes, his modest and collected air, his few and quiet gestures, his affectionate and impressive tones, all seemed to betoken deep religious feeling. He did not, like Bourdaloue, address himself to the reasoning faculties; he went straight to the soul, which he moved without upsetting, and touched without rending. His eloquence, full of unction and tenderness, bewitched rather than subjugated; his diction was easy, flowing, and harmonious. His *AVENT* and his *CARÊME*, preached before Louis XIV. at Versailles, are a succession of masterpieces. The *PETIT CARÊME*, preached before Louis XV. in 1718, is, perhaps, still more remarkable for its wonderful union of eloquence and simplicity. This, though brought down to the comprehension of the child-king, was principally addressed to those who governed in his name. Massillon knew the weaknesses of the great, and recognising the chief aim of their pride—the desire to be distinct from the common herd—he presented to them views, motives, and duties, which might raise and ennoble them, and thus in the interests of beneficence compounded with their vanity.

With Massillon, who indeed belongs rather to the next century, pulpit eloquence entered upon another phase. Without ceasing to be religious, it became more especially philosophical. Massillon is less of an apostle than a moralist; he studied the heart of man rather than the traditions of the Church; and replied to a question as to how he, vowed to the cloister, could draw such faithful pictures of human passions, "It is by studying myself that I have learned the art." Here is the spirit of Descartes freeing itself from dogmatic influences.

The three great men who preached each in their turn before Louis XIV. seemed to have answered by their special characteristics to the different stages in that monarch's life, and to the successive needs of that society

of which he was the centre. In a youthful, brilliant, and passion-moved court, Bossuet invested Divine truth with all the splendours of a fervid imagination. In the more mature age of reflection and political interests, Louis listened to the powerful arguments of Bourdaloue, who possessed as great a gift of reasoning as Bossuet did of description; the court, full of intrigues and ambitions, and therefore occupied in studying men, heard with delight an orator who knew so well how to analyse human nature. And at last, when misfortune had come to give its solemn warnings to the "*Grand Monarque*," a voice which consoled, even while it reproached, allured him into the wilderness of the solitude of his own heart that it might speak comfortably to him. Wearied of greatness, efforts, and failures, the king gladly inclined his ear to the lessons of that kindly wisdom, which clothed itself in eloquence, grace, and harmony. This too was the wisdom which was to close the brilliant cycle of this reign, by pronouncing over the grave of the monarch these sublime words, "God alone is great."<sup>4</sup>

Thus did Catholic preaching, all unwittingly, stretch out its hand to a purely human philosophy. The time was not far distant when Voltaire was to study Massillon assiduously, and to weave into his verse the fine prose of the Christian moralist.<sup>5</sup>

**Moral Writers.**—Even during the course of the seventeenth century, moral philosophy had been making its way,—less brilliantly, it is true, but uninterruptedly,—outside the pulpit of the Church. The manuscript works of Saint-Évremond,<sup>6</sup> a man of the world rather than an

<sup>4</sup> Opening words of his funeral oration on Louis XIV.

<sup>5</sup> La Harpe quotes some examples, *COURS DE LITTÉRATURE*, vol. vii. art. *Massillon*.

<sup>6</sup> 1613–1703. His collected works were published after his death.

author, were read with considerable avidity in the society which called them forth. As they were only within the reach of a privileged few, vanity was interested in talking of and praising them. They were for some time the fashion in the upper circles of both French and English society. His thought is not very striking, nor his style very brilliant, but he possessed the keenness of observation of a man who had lived long in the world, and the polished and flowing conversation of the cultivated society in which he moved. A disciple of Voiture, and a master of Voltaire, he has less affectation than the former, less sagacity than the latter, and less wit than either; but he serves as a transition between one and the other.

A more celebrated name is that of François de Mar-sillac, Duc de la Rochefoucauld.<sup>7</sup> His *MAXIMES OU RÉFLEXIONS MORALES* (1665) are a running fire of refined, brilliant, and paradoxical remarks, and are concise and epigrammatic in style. According to Voltaire this book was one of those which most contributed to form the taste of the nation, and to inspire it with a spirit of justice and precision. But La Rochefoucauld was more of an author than a philosopher, and still more of a courtier. He knew men and women, and those not the most upright or the most chaste, and from them he generalised his maxims. Self-love he judged to be the motive power of all human actions, because he had lived in an egotistical world; and he seems to doubt the existence of a virtue he had never met. In short, notwithstanding his evidently observant mind, he is a striking instance of the inevitable tendency of constant intercourse with one only class of society to warp the observation, and to lead us to draw

<sup>7</sup> 1618-1656.

precipitate and therefore unjust inferences from the narrow world in which we move.

A more eminent moralist than La Rochefoucauld was La Bruyère,<sup>8</sup> who was yet hardly a philosopher, inasmuch as he did not penetrate to first principles, never going beyond the surface where virtues and vices abound. However, without a philosophic plan or any pretension to profundity, he is charming, brilliant, and better acquainted with human nature than La Rochefoucauld. He prefaced his *CARACTÈRES* with a translation he had himself made of those of Theophrastus, and the comparison which this juxtaposition provokes is eminently favourable to the Frenchman. He seems to have described individuals,—how accurately we cannot know, but we guess them to be very faithfully portrayed, for as we read we find ourselves applying description after description to characters we have ourselves met with and known.

With the author of the *CARACTÈRES* close our literary annals of the age of Louis XIV., of which Michelet has said "that it ended everything, and initiated nothing." The last years of it are certainly "dull and dreary, and merit no remembrance. Most of the great generals, statesmen, and poets of the age of Richelieu and Colbert had passed away."<sup>9</sup> It seemed indeed a time of intellectual stagnation, but beneath this seeming stillness, the revolution—mental, political, and social—of the coming century was surely working. In Holland Bayle, the avowed champion of Pyrrhonism, was paving the way for the *Encyclopædia*. In England, a political revolution had actually been accomplished, and philosophers were thinking and writing. Even in France herself, the sceptical voices of Rabelais and Montaigne, drowned by the harmonious concert of the religious writers of Louis's reign, were silenced.

<sup>8</sup> 1613-1703.

<sup>9</sup> Bridges, *Lect. iv.*, before quoted.

but not deprived of the power of speech. Like those electric wires which, deep below the ocean billows, transmit thought and action from one continent to another, the incredulity of the sixteenth century passed secretly through the reign of Louis XIV., to shake to its very centre the age succeeding it. The FRONDE had bequeathed to it Lionne and de Retz, ardent and able Epicureans, the Princess Palatine, the great Condé, and the doctor-priest Bourdelot, timid and trembling doubters. Méré, Miton, Desbarreaux, were openly unbelieving ; Ninon and her train, Saint Évremond, Saint Réal, the poets Hesnault, Lainez, and Saint Pavin, formed in the religious society of the age a little world apart, which willingly accepted the theory of its pleasures as its creed. Vendôme, Chaulieu, and La Fare, made their palace of the Temple a hotbed of debauchery and free thought. Even at Versailles itself how many heathen vices fretted beneath the mask of decency, especially when the reign of Madame de Maintenon had confined them still more closely within the bounds of hypocritical appearances. All this was fermenting below the upper crust of official and well-ordered society. Bad instincts and generous aspirations combined, as in all revolutions, to overturn the present, recking little of the future. All felt that the end of the reign was the end of an epoch of society.

It was also the end of a cycle of literature. The rising tide of new ideas was soon to dash against and break the regular forms of the great century. Poetry and faith were about to take flight for a time to heaven ; and it was left for prose to compensate as best it might by new excellences for the quiet majesty and regular grace it was to lose. Henceforth light, brilliant, and acute, it will become a weapon, as literature itself will a power. *The philosophy of the eighteenth century is the French revolution in the domain of thought.*

“At the death of Louis XIV., D’Alembert was not yet born. Diderot and Rousseau were in their cradles. But Montesquieu was approaching manhood; and there was another young spirit who for some years had been watching the world around him with eager and impatient scorn, waiting like a wild beast chained, till the cry of joy that rang through France at the king’s death should give the signal for the combat. His name was François-Marie Arouet, commonly called Voltaire.”<sup>1</sup>

We began this history of this period by considering the effect of foreign influence on French letters; we will end it by considering the influence of France on all the rest of Europe. In the words of Macaulay:<sup>2</sup> “In literature she gave law to the world. The fame of her great writers filled Europe. No other country could produce a tragic poet equal to Racine, a comic poet equal to Molière, a trifler so agreeable as La Fontaine, a rhetorician so skilful as Bossuet. The literary glory of Italy and of Spain had set; that of Germany had not yet dawned. The genius, therefore, of the eminent men who adorned Paris shone forth with a splendour which was set off to full advantage by contrast. France, indeed, had at that time an empire over mankind such as even the Roman Republic never attained. For when Rome was politically dominant, she was in arts and letters the humble pupil of Greece. France had over the surrounding countries at once the ascendancy which Rome had over Greece, and the ascendancy which Greece had over Rome. French was fast becoming the universal language, the language of fashionable society, the language of diplomacy. At several courts princes and nobles spoke it more accurately and politely than their mother tongue. . . . [In

<sup>1</sup> Bridges, Lect. iv., as above.

<sup>2</sup> *HISTORY OF ENGLAND*, vol. i. ch. iii.



English literature] new canons of criticism, new models of style, came into fashion. . . . Our prose became less majestic, less artfully involved, less variously musical than that of an earlier age, but more lucid, more easy, and better fitted for controversy and narrative. In these changes, it is impossible not to recognise the influence of French precept and of French example."



## FOURTH PERIOD.

### *The Eighteenth Century.*

#### CHAPTER XVI.

#### VOLTAIRE.

**The Eighteenth Century.**—The seventeenth century, which, as we have seen, had witnessed in France the birth and growth to maturity of tragedy, ended in effete-ness and sterility. The closing years of the reign of Louis XIV., in which the eighteenth century opened, were dull and dreary, and appear perhaps all the more so from the contrast which they offer to those brilliant years immediately preceding them, in which French poetry rose to a height of perfection never attained before or since, and the French language, both in poetry and prose, was written with a care and purity quite unequalled. The *grand siècle*, which had broken in such lustre, closed darkly indeed. Its bright luminaries had gone out one by one, and their places had remained unfilled. Some, indeed, there were that still glimmered on, but their faint light showed only because the sky was dark: in the meridian splendour which had faded out, their pale beams would have been as invisible as stars at noontide.

"The eighteenth century," says Villemain,<sup>1</sup> "in moral chronology, began on the day of the first protestation—at the outset timid and discreet—against the monarchical splendour of Louis XIV., the religious domination of Bossuet, and the classical authority of antiquity,—three things of entirely diverse natures, which had been united and assimilated in the spirit of the seventeenth century. In this sense, we should date the eighteenth century from the famous Bayle (born in 1647), who, substituting philosophic irony for sectarian bitterness, began against theology that warfare of doubt and raillery from which Voltaire drew his strength. . . . Circumspect towards power, but of an unbounded audacity against doctrines, Bayle, indifferent about the political independence which his friends in Holland defended, and caring only for philosophical liberty, announces and characterises the first school of the eighteenth century."

Perrault, La Motte, and Terrasson had already in the last period, by their attack on the Ancients, made a way for freedom of thought. Voltaire himself had found a forerunner in Fontenelle, who by actual date belongs to both centuries. Yet the unregretted death of Louis XIV. on the 1st of September, 1715, may be said to have ushered in the new era.

At first, the work of literature seemed to be purely subversive. Creeds, manners, and ancient institutions fell beneath her blows. She attacked religion and threatened royalty, and seemed possessed with an enthusiasm of destruction. But beneath the ruins she made, those fertile germs which had been silently fructifying in the darkness of Louis's last years were putting forth their *first tender shoots*.

Nor was it literature alone which was overturning the

<sup>1</sup> COURS DE LITTÉRATURE, vol. i. p. 3.

old order of things. The whole ancient system was crumbling to decay by its own inherent weakness. The overstrained bow of absolutism broke of itself. The people had flouted the coffin of Louis XIV. The regent, and later on the king, were to flout the throne. The nobles of France swelled the trains of the royal mistresses, or stained with foul orgies the ancient escutcheons of their race. The parliaments, animated by a narrow *esprit de corps*, followed the age with unequal steps, now, abreast of it, resisting the foolish prodigalities of the court, or the abuses of elegant society; now, hopelessly behind it, pronouncing sentences dishonourable to criminal justice. Finally, too, many of the higher clergy, corrupted by the court, unbelieving and immoral, were incapable of defending, except by petty and unworthy persecutions, the religion of which they were the ministers.

In this general decrepitude of all ancient motive powers, a new one—that of public opinion—grew and gained strength, and literature was its exponent and its guide. Letters, hitherto looked upon merely as an ornament of society, now became its soul. Authors discussed governments and peoples; and, sounding the tottering foundations of power, enunciated those principles they judged desirable for its basis.

This application of thought to the public interests of the nation, gave that distinctive character to the writers of the eighteenth century which separates them from those of all preceding times; and letters took in France the place of those institutions which the country was still without.

This newly-acquired importance of literature largely increased the number of writers,—a fact which necessarily materially enlarged its sphere of influence. Men of letters were no longer an isolated caste, who enjoyed their honours in obscurity. Every *salon* was now open to them. They

bartered their goods with men of the world for theirs. "With the regency, French literature, though of a lower grade in genius and perfection [than in the age of Louis XIV.], begins to assume much more importance. It was then that the great mass of the public, freed of the prestige, the moral ascendancy of a court which could excite nothing save contempt, arrived at the hardihood of having ideas and opinions of its own, not only in religious, but on political and philosophical subjects. Writers began to sow the seeds of thought, no longer on the narrow enclosure of the court and aristocracy, but in the open field of the public mind. Books that had hitherto never raised discord, except upon abstruse points of faith amongst learned doctors, began in the regency to have general influence. A libel became a weapon as common and as poignant as the sword. The Duchesse du Maine employed men of letters in her husband's cause; and the Regent employed others, Fontenelle for example, to draw up his manifestoes. No sooner did men capable of wielding the pen become conscious of their force than they hastened to employ it. They were chiefly of the lower and degraded class, and felt sensibly the heavy oppression that weighed even less on personal than upon mental freedom. Not daring to affront the immediate instruments of this oppression, writers attacked or sapped the principles on which they were supported. Bayle had already assailed religion with his army of doubts and questions. The meekly froward Fénelon had dared, in his *TELEMACHUS*, to define and criticise the duties of royalty. Voltaire and Montesquieu now followed in the track. The former, ridiculing intolerance, found wit so powerful and successful in his hands, that he was carried forward unfortunately to attack religion itself; an attack, however, that must have redounded to its triumph, had

the national church not disgraced its creed by corruption, and betrayed it by ignorance. Montesquieu at the same time carried his inquiries into the unexplored regions of political philosophy. He was moderate and wise, shrank from revealing abuses, and often, when in his researches he has undermined or discovered the weak foundations of the bulwarks of monarchy, we find him instantly set to work to prop the tottering wall. But to counteract his own exertion was impossible. He excited inquiry; and when the curiosity of man is awake on such points, it must be satisfied by experience or demonstration. The latter is not to be met with in political theory; and the former is most often to be purchased at no less a price than revolution, anarchy, and crime."<sup>2</sup>

**Influence of England.**—It looks as if all the evolutions of French genius were to be hastened on by the influence of some neighbouring literature. In the sixteenth century Italy gave it the Renaissance; in the seventeenth, we have shown what was the influence of Spain. The first impulse of the eighteenth century came from England. Freedom of open criticism, the application of literature to the political and economic interests of the nation, the positive and materialistic tendencies of thought, the prosaic and somewhat vulgar tone of the productions of the human mind; all passed from England into France. But what amongst us was only scattered and isolated became intensely concentrated in France, and a common direction gave irresistible power to the new ideas. French philosophers, notwithstanding their differences, had a common aim, a common plan, a common spirit. They animated the abstractions of English philosophy with a popular and seductive eloquence. The discreet and learned incredulity of Tindal and Bolingbroke

<sup>2</sup> Crowe's HISTORY OF FRANCE.

became the biting sarcasm of Voltaire and the ardent deism of Rousseau. The science of Newton emerged from its sanctuary, thanks to the author of the *LETTRES ANGLAISES* and the *ÉLÉMENTS DE PHILOSOPHIE*; the cold and didactic analysis of Locke paled beside the eloquent pages of the *ÉMILE* and the *CONTRAT SOCIAL*; as if English ideas could not be made known to the world at large till they had found in France a European expression and an imperishable dress.

Amongst the host of new philosophical writers in France, four great names have absorbed the interest and admiration of posterity—Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Buffon. The first gave the signal of attack. At once a poet, an historian, and a philosopher, he placed every human opinion at the bar of his good sense. He was followed by a whole army of innovators, who exaggerated and over-strained his doctrine. Diderot and D'Alembert unfurled the banner of the *ENCYCLOPÆDIA* as their rallying point; and Helvetius, d'Holbach, and Lamettrie proclaimed systems calculated to annihilate all morality, hope, or poetry. Then arose the Genevese Jean-Jacques, fierce and burning as a censor, impassioned and seductive as a poet. He claimed for moral sentiment and liberty their eternal rights, and his words crushed and overwhelmed the cold speculations of atheism. Montesquieu and Buffon, looking on at a distance, divided between themselves the history of the past and of immortal nature, and sought to discover the laws of societies and of the universe. The one offered to an imminent political revolution the solid basis of the experience of centuries; the other showed, in anticipation of dawning physical science, the splendid picture of its future conquests, and in the words of the inscription on his statue, set up in his lifetime in the king's cabinet, *Majestati naturæ par ingenium*.

**Fontenelle.**—The part which Voltaire really enacted in the world's history seems to have been offered by destiny to Fontenelle. Yet he, notwithstanding his varied talents and his long life (1657–1757), passed in “the full sunshine of Parisian literature without care and without disease,” never rose to the first rank of French authors. He was the nephew and pupil of Corneille, the friend and survivor of Montesquieu, the contemporary of no less than three generations of men of letters. He belongs by character, as well as by actual date, to both periods. His best works are of the eighteenth century; his earlier ones, by their affected and pedantic gallantry, recall the days of the Hôtel Rambouillet. A paradoxical rather than a bold innovator in the seventeenth century, he was a timid and undecided conservative in the eighteenth. “His best productions,” says Hallam, “are, perhaps, the eulogies on the deceased members of the Academy of Sciences, which he pronounced during almost forty years, but these nearly all belong to the eighteenth century.” He delighted in paradox as well in science as in style: his *DIALOGUES DES MORTS* abound in it. His *ENTRETIENS SUR LA PLURALITÉ DES MONDES* achieved a great popularity. It is full of gaiety and vivacity, and its happy and ingenious combination of science and gallantry has never been successfully copied by any of its many imitators. Fontenelle tried every style of literature—tragedy, comedy, pastoral poetry, scientific dissertation. “His *HISTORY OF ORACLES*,” again remarks Hallam, “which Fontenelle published in 1687, is worthy of observation, as a sign of the change that was working in literature. In the provinces of erudition and of polite letters, long so independent, perhaps even so hostile, some tendency towards a coalition began to appear. The men of the world especially, after they had acquired a free temper of thinking in religion,



and become accustomed to talk about philosophy, desired to know something of the questions which the learned disputed ; but they demanded this knowledge by a short and easy road, with no great sacrifice of their leisure or attention. Fontenelle, in the *HISTORY OF ORACLES*, as in the *DIALOGUES ON THE PLURALITY OF WORLDS*, prepared a repast for their taste."

**Voltaire.**—But the true representative spirit of the eighteenth century is Voltaire. He gathers up in one all its tendencies, and transforms them in a brilliant individuality. An unbeliever, he gave to France what no Protestant sectarian had ever given to his country—toleration. A moderate reformer, a philosopher, a man of the world ; for him art, philosophy, and politics were but means of which the end was influence. He took complete possession of the mind of a century ; he filled a generation with his thought, and left an ineffaceable mark on the national character.

The two dominant qualities of his rare intelligence were passion and good sense, of which the one checked and corrected the other as bit and spur, and their union produced that sparkling, universal, irresistible wit, which was Voltaire's power.

The end and aim of all his efforts was the liberation of thought. The middle ages had transmitted to posterity a twofold authority : the traditional power of the Church, and the hereditary power of royalty. Voltaire, by dividing his attack, insured victory to himself. He employed the vanity of princes against religious faith. Catherine of Russia, Christian VII. of Denmark, Gustavus III., the Emperor Joseph II., and, more than all, Frederic the Great of Prussia, joined their forces to his. Voltaire has been by turns praised and blamed for what some have called his prudent tactics, but there is little doubt that

when he respected thrones, he was obeying his opinions rather than his prudence. He never aimed at a political revolution. He delighted in the elegant society of aristocratic drawing-rooms. It was there that he found readers capable of understanding and admiring him; and, doubtless, the feeble despotism of Louis XV., tempered by the power of opinion, seemed to him more favourable to the ascendancy of intellect than the agitations of a democracy.

He attacked the Church with unsparing violence. The despotism of the kings' confessors, the revocation of the edict of Nantes, the disputes on the Five Propositions, the miracles at the grave of the *Curé* of Saint-Médard, the vices of courtier-churchmen, the scandalous promotion to the College of Cardinals of Dubois; these and such-like infamies made him forget the real services the Church had in the middle ages rendered to the cause of morality and civilisation, and so far plead his excuse. His education, too, had developed his naturally anti-christian tendencies. In his childhood he had been exposed to the irreligious influence of his god-father, the infidel Abbé de Châteauneuf. His boyhood was passed at the College of Louis-le-Grand, where his Jesuit masters were unable to inspire him with any respect for the doctrines they inculcated. When he left college, De Châteauneuf introduced him into a society of young libertine lords, in which he made the acquaintance of the poets La Fare and Chaulieu. In 1726 he was thrown into the Bastille, because of a quarrel he had had with the Chevalier de Rohan. On his liberation he retired to England to visit Bolingbroke, whose friendship he had gained during the Englishman's exile in France. Here his unbelieving instinct ripened into positive infidelity.

*After a sojourn of nearly three years on this side the channel, he returned to his native country, where he pub-*

lished his *LETTRES ANGLAISES*, which were condemned by parliament to be publicly burned. It does not seem that during the whole of Voltaire's stay in England he ever went beyond London or its immediate neighbourhood. Well received by the friends of Bolingbroke, he was admitted to the congenial society of the most celebrated Englishmen of the day. He only wrote three or four times to his friends in France: "*Je mène la vie d'un rose-croix*," he says in one of these rare letters, "*toujours ambulant, toujours caché*."<sup>3</sup> But his desire was for France. It was there he wished to live, there he wished to make for himself a name. The promotion of Maurepas to the ministry enabled him to return. He brought back with him from England the sentiment of liberty in thought and action, and a remembrance of the homage paid to genius and science. He had seen the almost royal honours with which Newton had been laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, and had, doubtless, contrasted them in his own mind with the disgrace of Racine and the unhonoured grave of Descartes.

He found the mild Fleury at the head of affairs in France, and was at once made welcome in the reunions of the *grand monde*, whose chief occupation and amusement just then was literature. But this did not satisfy him, though he valued it much. He craved for a larger and more noisy renown, and to insure it retired from the capital. He first went to the house of Madame du Châtelet, and later to his own château of Ferney, in both which retirements he ceased not to pour forth a prodigious series of writings of all kinds, till death, in his 84th year, put a stop to them.

**Drama.**—He began his career as a writer of tragedy, by

<sup>3</sup> "I lead the life of a Rosicrucian, always on the move, and always hidden."

imitating Sophocles in his *ŒDIPÉ*, in which imitation he flattered himself he had surpassed his master ; but which a less partial critic than himself, La Harpe excepted, must pronounce decidedly inferior in both art and genius. After his return from England appeared *BRUTUS*, and the *MORT DE CÉSAR*, in which the elevating character of the inspirations he drew from our country is evident. But it was left for *ALZIRE* (1736), for *MÉROPE* (1743), for *TANCRÈDE* (1760), and above all, for *ZAÏRE* (1732), to draw tears and plaudits from that public for whose applause he yearned.

It is remarkable that twice, in his best tragedies, the good taste of the poet should have triumphed over the repugnance of the unbeliever, and drawn from Christianity some of his greatest beauties. "*Je tâcherai*," he writes, "*de jeter dans cet ouvrage (Zaïre) tout ce que la religion chrétienne semble avoir de plus pathétique et de plus intéressant, et tout ce que l'amour a de plus tendre et de plus cruel. Voilà ce qui va m'occuper six mois ; quod felix, faustum musulmanumque sit.*"<sup>4</sup>

Yet, as might be expected, the dominant influence in the plays of Voltaire is that of contemporary philosophy. This it was which inspired his declamatory tirades, and his lines written for effect,—nay, further, this it was which precipitated French tragedy into the abyss of the abstract, on the brink of which it had already for some time been trembling. More and more, by degrees, history, local colouring, individual character faded away, and left the stage to an ideal intrigue, which, like a mathematical problem, awaited solution in the infinite

<sup>4</sup> I shall try to throw into this work all that is most pathetic and interesting in the Christian religion, and all that is most tender and cruel in love. That will be my occupation for the next six months: *quod felix, faustum musulmanumque sit.*—CORRESPONDANCE GÉNÉRALE (L. Ivii.).

unknown. Abstraction, the fault of the philosophy and the politics of the eighteenth century; defaces likewise its drama. Its *dramatis personæ* are but situations, or, at best, characters; they are hardly ever human beings.

**Poetry.**—It was the success of his predecessors which had attracted Voltaire to the stage; a contrary reason induced him to attempt an epic poem. He would be an epic poet, he said, because as yet no Frenchman had been. He drew up the first outlines of his *HENRIADE* within the walls of the Bastille, revised and enlarged it in England, and finally retouched it on his return to France. He wrote it, as he himself said, to be immortal; and it met with an immense success. Frederick the Great wished to edit it, and in a laudatory preface placed it beside the *ÆNEID*. It is well for Voltaire that his immortality has better foundations to rest upon than this poem, for posterity has not endorsed the judgment of his contemporaries. It can hardly be called original, so close is its imitation of earlier epics, and especially of the *ÆNEID*. "It has," says M. Villemain,<sup>5</sup> "a tempest, a story told, a Gabrielle forsaken like Dido, a descent into the infernal regions, an Elysium, a foresight of the greatness and the ills of his country, and even a *Tu Marcellus eris*, applied to the Dauphin."

Voltaire was more fortunate when he tried to follow in the footsteps of Ariosto. Then he did not copy, but merely drank of the spirit of his model. It is to be lamented that he did not obey the laws of decency, and that masterpieces of style should disgrace, by their immorality, the literary traditions of France. This was a fault of most of the philosophic writers of the period; it seemed as though they thought to propagate reform by licence, and to make seduction the handmaid of liberty. With

<sup>5</sup> COURS DE LITTÉRATURE.

the yoke of the dogmas of the Church they threw off the austerity of her morals.

Voltaire's *Épîtres*, especially that to Madame du Châtelet, imitated from Thomson; his *Discours sur l'Homme*, suggested by Pope's *Essay on Man*, and his *Loi Naturelle*, are his own. In them he is an original poet, elsewhere he is an imitator inferior to his model.

**History.**—France, so fruitful in chronicles and memoirs, was without a history. History being the special stand-point from which each century judges of the past, it follows that it must each century be remade. The eighteenth had two sorts of historians,—learned and philosophical. The one gathered together and arranged the materials, the others sought to build up the structure. In the first class are Mabillon, Montfaucon, Martine, Ruinart, Vaissette, Lobineau, the learned and religious contributors to the literary glory of the Benedictines, a link with the past century; and Lancelot, Lebeuf, Fonce-magne, Sainte-Palaye, and Frérét, the illustrious members of the Academy of Inscriptions. The collection of their *Memoirs* is an historical treasure. Two hundred and fifty-seven articles on all the disputed points of French archæology have been counted. At the head of the second class, far in advance of his rivals, is Voltaire. His principal merit in this style of composition is that of having conceived and realised, as far as his mind and age allowed, the idea of a *Histoire de l'Humanité*. Antiquity had only recognised Greeks and Barbarians, or Jews and Gentiles; the Romans had only studied themselves. The Middle Ages had seen humanity in Catholicism, and said with S. Cyprian: "He only can have God for Father, who has the Church for Mother." Bossuet had seen it as a vast whole, but, from his exclusively religious point of view, he had only looked upon political history as the com-

plement of that of the Church, and had therefore wisely omitted modern times. Voltaire felt the solidarity of nations and the existence of a common aim. Thus, while religion was attacked in its dogmas and its worship, her very aggressors were helping, under the names of toleration and humanity, to develop the maxims of the Gospel.

Voltaire's first historical essay was his *HISTOIRE DE CHARLES XII.*, a lively and brilliant narrative, in which the style of the historian is in keeping with the impetuous character of his hero. To this succeeded an *ESSAI SUR LES MŒURS ET L'ESPRIT DES NATIONS*, in which the author was no longer to tell his readers "in which year a prince unworthy to be known succeeded in a barbarian nation to another prince as barbarous," but to teach them that "which is worthy of being known: the spirit, the manners, and the customs of the chief nations" of the earth. Voltaire opened the way to philosophical history. Side by side with political events, he studied the development of civilisation beneath the twofold influence of outward facts and the inward character of peoples. He pointed out the manifold diversities of manners, arts, and ideas, and demonstrated the progressive development of human intellect, and thus laid the foundations of two new sciences: the history of humanity, and the philosophy of history."<sup>6</sup>

His plan was vast; and we gasp at the amount of study and labour which the execution of it must have involved. "There are not many books with fewer mistakes in dates and facts; and without any affectation of erudition, Voltaire often draws from the surest sources."<sup>7</sup> He met with almost insurmountable obstacle in the proclivities peculiar to his mind and his age. The philosophers of

<sup>6</sup> Dr Mager, *GESCHICHTE DES FRANZÖSISCHEN NATIONAL LITERATUR*. B. i. s. 228.

<sup>7</sup> Villemain, *COURS DE LA LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISE*.

the eighteenth century loved humanity after a somewhat abstract fashion. They could neither understand nor forgive certain epochs which, necessary to its development, were in disaccord with their ideal of elegance and free thought. The Middle Ages, that long, weary period of preparation, only excited their anger and their scorn. They looked upon them as an enemy to be utterly overthrown, to whom no quarter could any longer be granted. A period so much disliked was sure to be badly described. Voltaire protests that its history "is no more worthy to be written than that of bears and wolves." The historian comes down from his place of judge to that of a satirical writer. He misconceives the whole of the pregnant feudal ages; and only re-ascends his tribunal at the RENAISSANCE. Yet, notwithstanding its defects, this work is one of the most remarkable productions of historical genius. "Still in our own day," says M. Villemain, "there is no lasting book on the general history of the modern world but Voltaire's *ESSAI*."

His *PHILOSOPHIE DE L'HISTOIRE* deserves less praise, and indeed much censure. The inexcusable ignorance it sometimes displays, its mistakes, its mutilated quotations, are aggravated by indecent jests quite unbecoming the dignity of history.

The *SIÈCLE DE LOUIS XIV.* is the most perfect of his historical works. Filled with sincere admiration for this brilliant period, he studied it *con amore*, and wrote of it worthily. The same philosophic thought inspired it as had inspired the *ESSAI SUR LES MŒURS*. "It is not only the life of the prince I write," he says in one of his letters,<sup>8</sup> "nor the annals of his reign, but rather the history of the human mind in that century, most glorious for the human mind." He was a long time, he again tells

<sup>8</sup> *CORRESPONDANCE GÉNÉRALE*, vol. i. letter xxxviii.



us,<sup>9</sup> gathering together the materials for this great work; every day he gave some stroke of the brush to the great century of Louis XIV., of which he desired to be "the painter and not the historian." Gibbon complains with justice of Voltaire's defective plan, by which the picture which should have struck us as a whole is broken up into fragments. First come political events; then anecdotes relating to the private life of the king; then the state of the finances, of letters, and of arts; and, finally, ecclesiastical affairs. The last part is more interesting than the first, which had been described over and over again by all sorts of writers: battles, sieges, negotiations, treaties; while the greater glories of arts and letters had hardly been touched upon, and offered to Voltaire an unexplored mine of interesting and important facts. . . .

**Philosophy.**—Voltaire has often and justly been called superficial. He aimed at nothing more. Popularity and influence were what he wrote for, and how he succeeded let the behaviour of Frederic at Potsdam and the familiar correspondence with Catherine of Russia tell. Voltaire did not aspire to be profound. "I am like those little brooks," are his own words to a friend,<sup>1</sup> "that are pellucid, because they have no depth." His effort was to be understood by all classes of readers. He wrote, not for the few, but for the many. "The French little know what trouble I give myself in order to give them none," he once said. In the strictest sense of the word, Voltaire was not a philosopher. He had no system and hardly any method, and he often changed his opinion on most important points. "The ignorant creature who thinks this has not always thought so," is his own con-

<sup>9</sup> CORRESPONDANCE GÉNÉRALE, vol. i. letter cxlviii.

<sup>1</sup> *Idem*, vol. i. letter ccklii.

fession, "but he is at last obliged to give in."<sup>2</sup> As to his religion, his recantation under fear of death is matter of history. But we must admit that, in spite of his faults, his love of justice and of mankind was undoubted; that he spared neither time nor trouble in succouring the oppressed; that he urged the reform of the criminal code, the abolition of torture, and the indispensable sanction of the sovereign for all death-warrants; and finally, his crowning glory, that he even won over his adversaries to the great principle of religious toleration. Unquestionably, on this last point, he overshot his mark, but we have to thank him that the world at large has attained to it.

In his lifetime he found that fame he panted for. "Letters," says M. Villemain,<sup>3</sup> "reigned over Europe, and Voltaire over letters. His name was the first of the age, after that of the conqueror of Dresden, who made himself his disciple and asked from him glory." Just before his death, he revisited Paris, already in the throes of Revolution. "What an outburst!" says Carlyle,<sup>4</sup> "sneering Paris has suddenly grown reverent; devotional with hero-worship. Nobles have disguised themselves as tavern-waiters to obtain sight of him: the loveliest of France would lay their hair beneath his feet. 'His chariot is the nucleus of a comet, whose train fills whole streets:' they crown him in the theatre with immortal vivats; finally, 'stifle him under roses,' for old Richelieu recommended opium in such state of the nerves, and the excessive patriarch took too much. Her Majesty herself had some thought of sending for him, but was dissuaded. Let Majesty consider it, nevertheless. The

<sup>2</sup> PHILOSOPHIE, vol. i.; LE PHILOSOPHE IGNORANT.

<sup>3</sup> COURS DE LITTÉRATURE, vol. i. letter xii.

<sup>4</sup> FRENCH REVOLUTION, vol i. ch. iv.

purport of this man's existence has been to wither up and annihilate all whereon majesty and worship for the present rests ; and is it *so* that the world recognises him ? With Apotheosis, as its Prophet and Speaker, who has spoken wisely the thing it longed to say ? Add only, that the body of this same rose-stifled, beatified patriarch cannot get buried except by stealth. It is wholly a notable business."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### STRIFE OF DOCTRINES.—THE ENCYCLOPÆDISTS AND THE RELIGIOUS PARTY.

**The Encyclopædia.**—Voltaire had eagerly seized the dangerous weapon of Descartes, and he had carried the principle of unfettered scrutiny into everything. An idea of renovation was so completely that of the century, that it united in a great undertaking all the best contemporary writers. To gather together in one huge work all human knowledge ; to judge of the past by the light of modern science ; to bind together in the bond of a common labour the most diverse and the most brilliant intellectual gifts, and to make of them a formidable bulwark against which ancient opinions should dash themselves to pieces in their resistance ; such was the idea which inspired the *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*. The general spirit which was to animate it, was that of the eighteenth century itself ; a scorn and hatred of the past, a marked estrangement from spiritual doctrines, and a decided predilection for ideas which had their source in sense and actual experience, and for arts, sciences, and industry. The plan of the book magnified the fault of the whole,—the absence of unity which could not but characterise a work so inspired. The *ENCYCLOPÉDIE* was a dictionary, in which *natural philosophy* and *grammar*, *commerce*, and *literature*, *mathematics* and *religion*, were huddled together

pell-mell, in the disconnected confusion of alphabetical order. It was in twenty-two *folio* volumes. Four thousand two hundred and fifty copies were issued. Not one remained. Eighteen hundred *livres* had been given for the last remaining copies. A second edition was called for. In vain the Jansenists in Parliament and the theologians of the Sorbonne sounded an alarm. The Duc de Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour protected and encouraged the Encyclopædists.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of the book, it was a great power in, and is a representative work of the eighteenth century. It manifests a decided progress in human knowledge and a desire to make this knowledge subservient to the good of man; but it is saturated with that scepticism which, in its desire to change the existing state of things, stopped at nothing, and, upsetting all religious principle, overturned even common morality. Voltaire says of its style of writing: "I find wretched articles in it which make me ashamed, even I, who am one of the shop-boys of this great shop." And yet Diderot and D'Alembert were the chiefs of the great enterprise;—Diderot, the most patient and, at the same time, the most enthusiastic spirit of his time; and D'Alembert, the learned and illustrious geometrician, whose moderation tempered the ardour and impetuosity of his friend. Diderot<sup>1</sup> has been called the "most German head" in France. He was the conceiver of the *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*, and for nine years laboured at it. Of a great intellect and a generous nature, he was an epitome of contradictions. He was the son of a cutler at Langres, and had begun life by translating as a means of subsistence. Then, greedy for fame, and seeing that the fashion of the day was to attack the ancient national faith of France, he

<sup>1</sup> Born in 1713—died in 1784.

published his *ESSAIS SUR LE MÉRITE ET LA VERTU*, and his *PENSÉES PHILOSOPHIQUES*. To these succeeded the *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*.

**D'Alembert.**—Jean-le-Rond d'Alembert (1717–1783) was a foundling picked up on the steps of the church of St Jean-le-Rond. He early discovered a taste for mathematical studies, and becoming known as an excellent geometrician and natural philosopher, he was in due time admitted to the Academy of Sciences. He wrote the introduction to the *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*, which is a masterpiece of precision and simple elegance. He took Bacon for his guide, and presented the picture of human knowledge under three successive aspects: first, subjectively,—the special aspect under which philosophers of sensation, and consequently those of the eighteenth century, regarded it; secondly, objectively, in the logical order of mutual relations, which was the classification of Bacon, and belonged to the seventeenth century; and finally, historically, by showing the progress letters and sciences had made since the Renaissance; this was anticipating our own time.

D'Alembert did not borrow from Bacon the eloquent and almost poetic enthusiasm of the English philosopher. The magnificent spectacle of the sciences arising one after another from the awakening human mind, till star after star was added to the firmament of knowledge, could stir no pulse in the heart of the learned geometrician. He relates with accuracy, but without enthusiasm, the progress of civilisation since the sixteenth century. He was all intelligence, and wanted soul.

**Other Encyclopædists.**—The Abbé de Condillac (1715–1780)<sup>2</sup> undertook to embody in a formula the philosophical principles of the eighteenth century. Starting with the opinions of Locke, he strove to surpass him

<sup>2</sup> Born in Paris, 1715—died in the same city, 1771.

in methodical rigour and transparent clearness. His system is a sort of algebra, the simplicity of which is due to abstraction. He was held to be a faithful exponent of the philosophy of Locke, but his ultra-sensationalism is more akin to the views of Berkeley. He numbered many distinguished men amongst his most intimate friends, and men of the world, overjoyed at seeming to understand what had always been imagined beyond their ken, were grateful to him for having allowed them to become philosophers.

Helvetius, whom Voltaire had surnamed Atticus, was a wealthy *fermier-général*, upright, kindly, and well-mannered. He gathered to his *petits soupers* the most licentious philosophers and the most abandoned women, who were attracted thither by the most delicate dishes and the rarest wines. Luxury and licence reigned supreme. Philosophical discussions and ribald anecdotes were the entertainments offered. Diderot, Suard, and Galiani argued and disputed; Crébillon, St Lambert, Bernard, and de Bernis sang Anacreontic songs, and told stories of gallantry. To the latter of these Helvetius listened for gratification, to the former for a purpose. He had resolved to gather them together in a book. This book appeared under the title of *DE L'ESPRIT*, and the philosophers themselves were alarmed at this summary of their opinions, by which man is made to differ from the brutes only by the conformation of his organs, and virtue is but selfishness wisely understood.

Another of the patrons of the Encyclopædists, the Baron d'Holbach,<sup>3</sup> went even farther. He was the head of the Materialistic party, and was called by the philosophers, whom, like Helvetius, he welcomed to his table, the *maître d'hôtel* of philosophy. He published, under

<sup>3</sup> Born at Heidesheim in the Palatinate, 1723—died in Paris, 1789.

the pseudonym of Mirabaud, the *SYSTÈME DE LA NATURE*, than which no code of atheism can be more complete or more logically absurd. It was an entire negation of all that is great, noble, or true, in the heart of man. Goethe says that he almost quaked before it as before a spectre. The eighteenth century had reached the lowest depth of the abyss. Society was alarmed; even Voltaire uttered a cry of terror; and Frederick of Prussia tried to refute the book—but in vain! It was but an application of their own materialistic principles, then so universal.<sup>4</sup>

^ The philosophers next passed on to attack royalty. The principle of authority was shaken in both its forms. Voltaire had written from Ferney that the cause of kings was the cause of philosophers. His own disciples gave him the lie. D'Holbach and his fellows confounded in their invectives monarchical despotism and sacerdotal power. Hitherto the philosophic watchword had been, "No priests;" now it was to be, "Neither priests nor kings." "Cowardly people," exclaimed Raynal in his *HISTOIRE DES DEUX INDES*, "imbecile flock! you are satisfied with groaning when you ought to roar."

Voltaire feared with a mixture of joy. "A revolution will infallibly come," he wrote, "and I shall not have the pleasure of seeing it." Jean-Jacques expresses the same foreboding, with grave eloquence, in his *EMILE*: "We are drawing near to a state of crisis and an age of revolution."

**The Religious Party.**—But before passing on to consider the part which Rousseau played in the controversies of this time, we will notice briefly the two parties which strove in their different ways to stem the torrent of immorality and irreligion which threatened to devastate France. And first we will mention the religious party,

<sup>4</sup> The best refutation is that of Bergier, *EXAMEN DU MATÉRIALISME*.



the remains of the small but distinguished school of the Jansenists. This party, eminent as it was for virtue and piety, lacked the one thing needful in such a strife—genius. Nounotte, Burigny, Houtteville, and others were almost ridiculous in the want of power of controversy and reputation which they displayed. The Abbé Guénée alone, in his *LETTRES DE QUELQUES JUIFS*, showed himself worthy of his self-imposed task. He had over Voltaire the great and important superiority of a knowledge of the Hebrew language and antiquities, and was sometimes quite equal to him in the mocking vivacity of his wit. But such gifts were not sufficient to defend the Bible and religion. There were others who, like Bergier, refuted the new doctrines with power and gravity; but they were wanting in passion and eloquence, and were not read. France had no longer a Bossuet.

There were others, too, who, without entering into controversy, remained faithful to the principles of orthodoxy, and expressed themselves more or less clearly in their writings. Of these were the Chancellor d'Aguesseau,<sup>5</sup> an agreeable orator, and a man of learning and piety, but one deficient in power and originality, and mild almost to indecision. His *Discours* on the life of his father, to whose virtuous example and careful education he owed so much, is interesting both from its historical reminiscences of the reign of Louis XIV., and from the picture which it gives of the noble virtues which were the heritage of many magisterial families of those days. "The last pages of this *Discours*," remarks Villemain,<sup>6</sup> "are touching and beautiful: it is the death of a Christian worthy of

<sup>5</sup> Born at Limoges, 1688—died 1751. Principal works, *INSTRUCTIONS À SON FILS*, *SPEECHES*, *MEMOIRS*, *CORRESPONDENCE*, &c.

<sup>6</sup> *COURS DE LITTÉRATURE*, vol. i. letter x.

ancient days. But beside this death-bed, encircled by holy ceremonies, and the tears of a pious family, already appears the new spirit which was to penetrate everywhere. 'My father,' says the Chancellor, 'after having given my brother his blessing, and prayed to God for him, added some words, recommending him not to be too much of a philosopher.'"

Contemporary with d'Aguesseau was Rollin (1661-1741), the son of a poor cutler; the brilliant scholar of Plessis; the professor, rector, and principal of the college of Beauvais. His life was pure and disinterested; his character, a mixture of the republican virtues of PLUTARCH'S LIVES, and the gentle graces of the Bible. These two books were his favourite study in his long holidays, spent with his friends, the brothers d'Asfeld at Colombes. He devoted himself to the education of youth, and hoped thus to reform public manners.

In the quarrels of the University with the Jesuits Rollin took the side of his friend Arnauld, and condemned as a Jansenist, was obliged to resign his post at Beauvais. He retired to a little house on the outskirts of Paris, and there gave himself up to study and literature. His first publication was his *TRAITÉ DES ÉTUDES*, one of the best written books in the French language, in which the author seeks to induce the substitution in the education of youth of a natural development of the mind and heart, for the arbitrary rules and inflexible laws of the ancient curriculum. His theory was a continuation in a somewhat modified form of the teaching of Port-Royal, from which, too, he borrowed the idea of enlarging the ordinary course of education by admitting into it the study of sciences, and the results of modern research. Mesanguy, condemned by the Roman Curia in 1761, and the Abbé d'Asfeld, exiled from France as a Jansenist

by Fleury, helped Rollin (by, respectively, the *EXPOSITION DE LA DOCTRINE CHRÉTIENNE*, and the *ÉTUDES DE LA NATURE*) in his attempted reform.

To the *TRAITÉ* succeeded his *HISTOIRE ANCIENNE*, the fame of which spread through Europe, and drew flattering acknowledgments from Frederick of Prussia. This book, as well as his unfinished *HISTOIRE ROMAINE*, is wanting in critical accuracy, but gives on the whole a correct general idea of antiquity.

His most illustrious pupil was Louis Racine, the son of the great poet, a man of varied learning, "one of the best and last heirs of Port-Royal." His *MÉMOIRES* of his father are full of interest, and are his best work, brimming over as they do with the filial piety which seems to have likewise inspired his reflections on *POETRY* and *DRAMATIC ART*. Crévier, author of a dry *HISTOIRE DES EMPEREURS ROMAINS*, and Lebeau of a no less heavy *HISTOIRE DU BAS-EMPIRE*, are also pupils of Rollin.

The other historians of the time were the learned Fréret, a supporter of the philosophical party; the President de Brosse, a contributor to the *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*; and Duclos, favoured by the King and the philosophers, the author of *CONSIDÉRATIONS SUR LES MŒURS*, and the piquant *MÉMOIRES SECRETS SUR LES RÉGNES DE LOUIS XIV. ET DE LOUIS XV.*

We have said that genius was wanting to the religious party. But there was one man who lived and wrote at this time, "one of the most original geniuses of our literature," says Villemain;<sup>7</sup> "the first of prose satirists; inexhaustible in his details of manners; painting, like Tacitus, with a word; the creator of a language of his own; and, without correction, order, or art, an admirable writer." This was the Duc de Saint-Simon, author of the

<sup>7</sup> *COURS DE LITTÉRATURE*, vol. i. letter x.

remarkable posthumous MÉMOIRES<sup>8</sup> which bear his name, but which, as they were not published till the end of the century, were without influence on the opinion of the time of which we are writing. He was forty years of age at the death of Louis-le-Grand, and belonged to his reign. A loyal, haughty *grand seigneur*, he loved and defended religion, because he looked upon it as one of the integral parts of monarchy; but he was, notwithstanding, full of contempt for the bishops, *qui ne sont pas nés, or qui n'ont pas de monde, les cuistres violets*. What could he understand of the new power of literature, he whose only fear in writing was that he, the high-born scion of a knightly house, should be confounded with historians who were such by profession?

Between the two opposing camps—the philosophical and the religious party—stands Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de Vauvenargues. He belongs to the first by his intimacy with Voltaire, and the unquiet agitation of his mind; and to the second by the religious tendencies of his soul, the purity of his life, the candour of his writings, and the sincerity of his doubts. His health was always delicate, and he died at the early age of thirty-two, leaving behind him MAXIMES, CARACTÈRES, MÉDITATIONS, and an INTRODUCTION À LA CONNAISSANCE DE L'ESPRIT HUMAIN. He was a moralist of the style of La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, whom he does not equal in style or genius, but whom he surpasses in the importance of his subjects. He proves the truth of his own words,—Great thoughts come from the heart.

**Minor Writers.**—Whilst, as we have seen, the domain of thought was unequally divided between two rival armies, pure and disinterested art and a loving cultiva-

<sup>8</sup> These were not published in a complete series till 1829. Certain volumes had appeared in 1789.

tion of the beautiful, seemed to be overlooked in the noisy, all-engrossing strife of doctrines. The poetical traditions of the seventeenth century were, however, carried on by a small band of men who, without being philosophers were free-thinkers, of simple lives, hating novelties, and submissive to established authority and received usages.

The first of these was Le Sage, a lineal descendant in the great family of men of letters of Molière, one of the greatest of French satirists, and the most tasteful of French writers. His life (1668–1745) belongs to both centuries; his great work, *GIL BLAS*, the first part of which actually appeared the year of Louis XIV.'s death, is of the seventeenth. Like the great writers of the period, he had drunk from Spanish springs, and the idea and title of his first successful work, *LE DIABLE BOITEUX*, were taken without disguise from Guevara. This romance had an immense success at the Court of the great Louis. A story is told of two young noblemen who disputed with drawn swords in a shop for the last copy it contained of *LE DIABLE BOITEUX*.

*GIL BLAS* appeared soon after, and its success was, as it deserved to be, even greater than that of its predecessors. This book has been translated into almost every European language. Our own Walter Scott, the inventor of modern historical romance, speaks of it with high praise; and Spain has testified her appreciation of it by claiming it as her own, and charging Le Sage with robbery. Besides these two world-known romances, he wrote and translated several dramas, the best of which is *TURCARET*.

The existence of Le Sage was calm and unruffled. It was not so with his contemporary, the Abbé Prévost, whose voluminous writings, tragic and pathetic, reflect the storms and passions of his life. Born in 1697 in Artois, and educated by the Jesuits, he joined their order as a

novice in his boyhood. At sixteen he left them to volunteer for the victorious army of Louis XIV. Soon forsaking the uncongenial life of a camp, he returned to his early preceptors, and penitently begged to be again admitted to the noviciate. Once more he entered the army, and plunged into the dissipations and excesses of an officer's career. The unhappy termination of an engagement to a woman he tenderly loved drove him back again to the cloister, but this time to the learned Benedictines of Saint-Maur. Prévost was then only twenty-two years of age. In due course he entered the priesthood, and was chosen to preach a *Carême* at Evreux, where he delighted his hearers. He was finally sent to the Abbaye of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, to work at the *Collections Savantes*. These dry studies were not to his taste, and once again the pleasures of life whispered enticingly in his ear. "Feeling came back to me," he confesses, "and I understood that this warm heart was burning beneath its crust of ashes." He tried to solace himself by writing a romance, and relating, evening by evening, long tales of imagination to his brothers. There was no more liberty for him—a monk and a priest. Rome could at least mitigate the hardship of his captivity. He applied to her to translate him to the less austere monastery of Cluny, and she did not refuse, but sent a brief for the purpose to the Bishop of Amiens. This bishop, however, declined to publish it, and Prévost, who had already left Saint-Germain-des-Prés, found himself a religious without a cloister. He took refuge in that asylum which had sheltered so many of his countrymen, Holland. At the Hague he published his first work, *MÉMOIRES D'UN HOMME DE QUALITÉ*. Here, too, he fell in love with a beautiful young Protestant, who returned his affection. *He did not forget the double vow he had taken upon him-*

self, but this remembrance only served to deter him from actual marriage with one who was his wife in all but name. From Holland he passed into England, followed by the unhappy object of his love. Here he undertook the publication of a literary journal, *LE POUR ET LE CONTRE*, and in 1732 brought out *CLÉVELAND* and *MANON LESCAUT*. His life and his works soon became known, and he was attacked and reproached by one of his own countrymen, Dufresnoy, from whose half-scornful, half-indignant charges he strove to defend himself by protesting that he was a laborious student, mild but melancholy, sober and regular in his habits; and, as far as they went, these statements are probably true of his life in London. For several years this life lasted, and then came the longed-for recall to France. On his return he was dispensed from his vows as a Benedictine, and, in his character of secular priest, was made chaplain to the Prince de Conti, an admirer of his writings. He went on with *LE POUR ET LE CONTRE*, and wrote *LE DOYEN DE KILLERINE*. But his troubles were not ended. He was obliged to escape from a *lettre de cachet*, for some connection with a newspaper which displeased the Government, by flying to Brussels. After a short time, protected by the Chancellor d'Aguesseau, he returned to Paris, and published his *HISTOIRE DES VOYAGES*, a book of much merit, partly original, partly translated from the English.

{ His writings, like those of Voltaire, give unmistakable evidence of English influence, and more especially of that of Richardson. He died suddenly at the age of sixty-four, leaving behind him more than a hundred volumes. In Voltaire's words, "He was not only an author, but a man who had known and felt passions."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> This sketch of Prévost's life is abridged from Villemain's *COURS DE LITTÉRATURE*.

About the same time as Prévost lived Madame de Tencin, the friend of Montesquieu and the mistress of Dubois. She, like Prévost, was a religious dispensed from her vows, and a writer of romances, the best of which is *MÉMOIRES DU COMTE DE COMMINGES*.

Another ecclesiastic, the Abbé Barthélemy, was the author of a learned work on the arts, manners, and customs of Greece, which, clothed in the garb of romance, he called *VOYAGE DU JEUNE ANACHARSIS EN GRECE*.

Jean Baptiste Rousseau was the author of licentious *Epigrams*, and—a somewhat odd combination—of some *Sacred Poetry*. Lefranc de Pompignan also wrote *Sacred Poetry*. The *MANLIUS* of La Fosse was that author's only successful tragedy, as was the *INÈS* that of La Motte. Lagrange-Chancel attempted in vain to rival Racine. The terrible Crébillon was the most successful tragic writer of this period. Saurin, an imitator of Voltaire, wrote philosophical tragedies, to which de Belloy replied by royalist ones. The comic poets, too, waged war against each other. The two best, Gresset, author of *LE MÉCHANT*, and Piron, author of *LA MÉTROMANIE*, were opposed to Voltaire. With them were Collé and Palissot; against them, Lanoue, Barthe, Desmahis, Sédaine. Marivaux lost himself in fine analyses, Destouches produced wretched imitations of English writers, La Chaussée wrote tearful comedies, and Diderot, tragedies utterly unworthy of his great intellect.

**Conclusion.**—Society was undergoing a vast change, and poetry saw that it must soon do the same. Philosophy seemed to deny the existence of a soul, or at best placed it in sensation. Poetry then could no longer describe the inward workings of that in which society believed not. It sought for something else to describe, and found it in external nature. A school of descrip-



tive poets arose. Saint-Lambert sang of *LES SAISONS*, Lemierre of the *FASTES* of the year, but neither pleased or interested. Poetry seemed dying with faith. The universe had no charms for men, who saw in it nothing but an inanimate and skilful piece of mechanism. "Nature was dead to their eyes, as hope was to their inmost hearts."<sup>1</sup>

Such was in France the situation of thought, and its expression, literature. Two rival parties disputed for the moral guidance of the eighteenth century. The one rich in all mental gifts, impetuous and untiring, was dry and sterile, because of its desolating doctrines. The other, religious from habit and tradition, rather than from conviction, without warmth or eloquence, was impotent to defend those eternal truths of which it was the self-constituted arbiter. Between these two parties, it seemed as if faith in God, in the spirituality of the soul, in duty and virtue, furiously attacked and weakly defended, must die, or at least suffer total eclipse, carrying with it the purest emotions and best sympathies of the poet; when suddenly a powerful and unlooked-for defender arose. His burning eloquence, full of faults and exaggerations, of contradictions and sincerity, alone had all the qualities and vices necessary to obtain for it a hearing from the men of the eighteenth century, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau was listened to by them with rapt attention and extravagant admiration.

<sup>1</sup> *NOUVELLE HÉLOÏSE*, part i. letter xxvi.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

**His Education.**—We must not expect to find in Rousseau either the consistency or the impartiality of a philosopher. He was a man of action and of strife, casting down and building up at the same moment;—a man of paradoxes. Still we cannot but be thankful to him for having felt the necessity of laying, amid ruin and devastation, the foundations of positive doctrines. He did three great services to his own century and to ours. In politics, he sought in national right a solid basis for power; in morals, he re-awakened the sentiment of duty, and proclaimed, with all the eloquence of conviction, the existence of God and the spirituality of the soul; and lastly, as a consequence of these noble principles, he unsealed the springs of poesy, and made it enamoured of nature.

His birth and education had prepared him for the part which his genius fitted him to play in his adopted country's history. A life of wandering and want, of humiliation and oft-times of misery, developed that genius, and at the same time awakened in his breast those thoughts of change and innovation on which happier souls were pondering, but which he was to proclaim with the overwhelming force of a conviction born in isola-

tion, and nurtured in unhappiness. He first saw light<sup>1</sup> in the republic of Geneva, amidst the grand scenery of the Alps. The son of a poor but intelligent artisan, his dreamy childhood was precociously developed by assiduous reading of Plutarch's *Lives* and the heroic romances of the seventeenth century. Life opened upon him under a romantic aspect at once sublime and false. Surrounded in his infancy by the loving cares of needy tenderness, he felt all the more cruelly the bitterness of a despised and humble lot. An apprentice, a wanderer, a lackey, a copier of music, compelled to note down the last time he had been in danger of dying of hunger,—and all this with an exalted nature and a high intelligence,—he carried within himself in the most striking degree that begetter of revolutions, a hopeless discord between social position and natural instincts and capabilities. Jean-Jacques is the representative of a class which the elegant world then in power scorns and misunderstands. No wonder, therefore, that a bitter antagonism to the existing order of things, and a somewhat envious misanthropy, sprang up and flourished in his breast. In the very midst of academies and of drawing-rooms sounded the piercing cry of the outcast, howling forebodingly round the deepest foundations of society. But before he can step forth in the lists, he must furbish up his arms. No better place than Paris for the purpose. There in the intimacy of men of letters, he spends five or six years, striving hard to make himself master of the art of writing. He reads Racine and Voltaire, studies Cicero and Horace, and essays to translate Tacitus. Even at forty years of age he could often be seen, walking up and down the public gardens, a Virgil in his hand, striving to inscribe on his rebellious memory those simple eclogues, to

<sup>1</sup> Born 1712—died 1778.

which the remembrance of the scenes of his childhood furnished a commentary. This was not all. He studied unaided history, philosophy, mathematics. His language, learned at Geneva, and moulded by the old writers of the sixteenth century, always retained a somewhat foreign tone, which is racier, bolder, more popular, and more democratic than that of any of his contemporaries. At thirty-eight he was ready. He attacked the corrupt society about him, and charmed it while he attacked.

**His First Work.**—The Academy of Dijon had proposed the question, *Has the re-establishment of arts and sciences served to purify or to corrupt manners?* Jean-Jacques condemns arts and sciences in the name of virtue. He unjustly makes them responsible for the corruption which had befouled the use of them. He combats with an exaggeration, which though unfair was necessary, “that philosophy of a day, which is born and dies in the corner of a great city, and which strives to stifle the cry of nature and the universal voice of mankind.”<sup>2</sup> Thus in his very first attempt, Rousseau boldly placed the cause of moral sentiment in opposition to the most brilliant mental gifts.

In his second discourse his revolutionary instinct is more distinctly expressed. The same Academy asked, *What is the origin of inequality amongst men, and is it authorised by natural law?* The opportunity of striking a blow at institutions of whose vices his conscience as well as his pride convinced him, was too good to be lost. Rousseau unfolded his radicalism, and maintained that civilisation makes man guilty and miserable, and that savages alone are good, free, and happy.

“You make one want to go on all fours,” is Voltaire’s sarcastic remark. For the matter of that, this dream of a

Letter to d’Alembert.

state of nature was common in the eighteenth century. Gessner's weak idylls and Florian's insipid ruralities were welcomed with a gushing enthusiasm. Fontenelle had already composed dialogues between unreal imaginary swains. A little later on, a queen of France built herself a farm at Trianon, and with the ladies and gentlemen of her court played at shepherds and shepherdesses. Rousseau was the most thorough and consistent organ of this vague instinct of his time. This second discourse of his was full of threatening propositions and dread-inspiring aspirations. As we read it, we seem to hear the swell of the democratic tide beating against the crumbling wall of old institutions. "The insurrection which dethrones and kills a sultan is an act as lawful as those by which yesterday he disposed of the lives and property of his subjects. The despot is only master as long as he is strongest." The discourse ends thus: "It is manifestly against the law of nature that a child should govern a man, that an imbecile should guide a wise man, and that a handful of people should be surfeited with superfluities whilst a famishing multitude is in need of bare necessities."

**Contrat Social.**—Rousseau did not confine himself to the somewhat easy task of criticism. He ventured to embody his principles in a theory of government which he gave to the world in a work entitled the *CONTRAT SOCIAL*,—"his new Evangel of a *CONTRAT SOCIAL*," as Carlyle says,<sup>3</sup> "explaining the whole mystery of government, and how it is *contracted* and bargained for to universal satisfaction."

No system has ever yet been promulgated in a severer and more striking shape. The precision of its style, the close chain of its propositions, the imposing dogmatism of its language, the self-controlled passion of its enunciation,

<sup>3</sup> FRENCH REVOLUTION, vol. i., ch. vii.

all make the *CONTRAT SOCIAL* a finished model of philosophical exposition. It has, however, the same fault as the philosophy of Locke and Condillac. It starts with an abstract, exclusive, and incomplete principle. "Man is born free;" these are its opening words, and this is its whole thought. If man emerges from his natural and savage independence, it is by an act of his will. Thus every society is founded on a contract. The State rests on an arbitrary convention. The sum of individual wills makes the general will, which is the only true law. The real sovereign is the people. Their caprice is absolute and inviolable, their decision without appeal. Rousseau affirms *de jure* what the Roman juriconsults maintained *de facto*: *Uti populus jusserit, ita lex esto*.

He leaves out of his system the eternal nature of things, and therefore unfolds but one side of the social problem. Montesquieu, of whom we shall have to speak by and by, had already developed the other. It has been truly said that Rousseau's was but a reversal of the system of Hobbes, the despotism of the many instead of the despotism of one.

The pernicious effects of this speculative error of a man of such vast influence as Rousseau's were clearly demonstrated by the faults and miseries of that great political reaction which we call the French Revolution.

All France, unbelieving in aught else, believed in this "Gospel according to Jean-Jacques," and so far France was the gainer. It was better than the creed of the sceptics—"We believe in nothing." It was well for her that she was tiring of that. This was a better faith—this faith in the *CONTRAT SOCIAL*—than a faith in the doctrines of Helvétius and d'Holbach. "Freedom by *Social Contract*: such was verily the gospel of that era. And all men had believed in it, as in a Heaven's glad

tidings men should ; and with overflowing heart and uplifted voice clave to it, and stood fronting Time and Eternity on it. Nay, smile not, or only with a smile sadder than tears ! This, too, was a better faith than the one it had replaced ; than faith merely in the Everlasting Nothing and man's Digestive Power ; lower than *which* no faith can go."<sup>4</sup>

**Émile.**—The **ÉMILE** is to morality what the **CONTRAT SOCIAL** is to politics. In opposition to most of the philosophers of his time, who represented man as in subjection to sensation, Rousseau proclaimed man's moral liberty, and maintained that it was by this, even more than by his understanding, that he was superior to the brutes. The **ÉMILE** has been called by Göthe the "natural gospel of Education" (*das Naturevangelium der Erziehung*). Its keynote is that "man is naturally good ;" hence education, by substituting the contagious vices of society for the original rectitude of nature, depraves him. Therefore Rousseau had argued (in a letter to M. de Beaumont) that "negative education is the best, or rather the only good one ; for if it does not instil virtue, it prevents vice ; if it does not teach truth, it at least preserves from error." So Jean-Jacques would isolate his pupil, leaving him to evolve from the natural and spontaneous expansion of his soul, arts, sciences, religion, even God Himself. How different from the lofty idea of Pascal, that human nature is but as a single individual living and learning for ever ! In Rousseau's philosophy we feel an oppressive sense of a society verging on dissolution, from which a man who aspires to be virtuous must separate himself, as did the *stoic* of ancient days from the corruption of the empire. How vain and impossible is the effort ! Man cannot shut himself up in himself, or be his own universe. The tradi-

<sup>4</sup> FRENCH REVOLUTION, Carlyle, vol. ii., ch. vii.

tions of the human race must come to him to warn him from evil, and to spur him on to good.

And yet in those days when Christian pulpits were silent, or too timorous to rebuke, Rousseau was as a preacher of religion. The morality of his writings is so far Christian tinged with Calvinism. The icy breath of his country's glaciers seems to have blown upon his soul. A systematic enemy of art and of the soul's expansion, he is at one with the rigid theologians of the narrow way. Like Port-Royal, he despises letters; like Bossuet, he writes a *LETTRE CONTRE LES SPECTACLES*. His own life was in notorious opposition to the principles he inculcated, so little can an imperfect philosophy really raise man above the dominion of the senses. The man who proscribed arts and the drama wrote a romance which breathes the very intoxication of passion—*LA NOUVELLE HÉLOÏSE*—for which reason he has been considered the most inconsistent of philosophers.

**His Poetry.**—The beneficial effect of his influence on poetry is undoubted. He charged Voltaire with sacrificing vigorous beauties to false delicacy, and gave to French literature a simple, touching poetry, an echo of Nature's voice never heard in France before. He did not write in verse, but yet he was one of the greatest French poets of the eighteenth century. His passionate love of music gave an unconscious melody to his phrases, just as his passionate love of nature gave a poetic beauty to his ideas. His *CONFESSIONS* are the most interesting and the most original of all his works. "Rousseau," says a writer in the *FORT-NIGHTLY REVIEW*,<sup>5</sup> "like Byron, was an outcast from his country, and, in a great measure, from society; and, like Byron, and even more than Byron, he acquired, in what was practically his exile, that peculiar earnestness and in-

<sup>5</sup> 1869. "Literary Egotism."



tensity which tinges all his writings, and makes itself felt even when his style is picturesque and playful. It is visible in every page of his *CONFESSIONS*, and has contributed not a little to their popularity. Other causes have no doubt helped. The favour with which that celebrated work has been received is due partly to the charm of its style ; partly to the romantic and ever-changing incidents that are related in it ; partly to the glimpse it affords of such men as D'Alembert, Condillac, and Diderot, and of the great France of the last century ; and with some readers there may probably be another cause, which it is needless to specify. But the intensity of the feeling must count for something. It would even seem as if Rousseau thought that he had a call and mission to describe himself. Yea, woe is unto me, he seems to say, if I preach not myself ! In one place he literally avows that he is far more afraid of omitting some details than of painting himself too minutely. His scrupulous precision extends even to physical peculiarities, which have no very obvious bearing on his character or conduct. . . . . In what he tells us about his religious condition and practices, the earnestness of which we have spoken, and also the original turn which he gives to everything, will leave on most minds a very lasting impression."

The enthusiasm of Rousseau, no less than the irony of Voltaire, hastened on that work of ruin and overthrow which was the fatal mission of that time.

**Mably.**—Rousseau had had a predecessor in Mably, as Voltaire had had in Fontenelle. Mably had written *OBSERVATIONS SUR L'HISTOIRE DE FRANCE*, and *DRIT PUBLIC DE L'EUROPE FONDÉ SUR LES TRAITÉS*. He had condemned arts, luxury, and modern civilisation, but "his enthusiasm for patriotic virtues and Spartan manners would have remained buried in his books, if the imagina-

tion of Rousseau had not given fire to this peaceful dream of a learned logician."<sup>6</sup> He had, however, greater knowledge of history than Rousseau, and was the first to expose the anachronism by which French historians had hitherto, in describing the past, carried into it the manners, customs, and prejudices of their own day.

<sup>6</sup> Villemain, "COURS DE LITTÉRATURE."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### MODERATE REFORM.

**Montesquieu.**—Contemporaneously with the great movement we have been signalising stirred another less noisy but not less remarkable. Montesquieu united in his brilliant career its extreme points. It began in his *LETTRES PERSANES*, and ended in his *ESPRIT DES LOIS*.

Charles Sécondat, Baron de Montesquieu et de la Brède, was born near Bordeaux in 1689, exactly one hundred years before the outbreak of the French Revolution. He was a president of the parliament of Bordeaux. His first literary work was a semi-theological treatise, in which he strove to prove that Pagans were not necessarily condemned to eternal damnation. He became founder of an Academy of Sciences at Bordeaux, where he delivered lectures on various subjects in Natural Philosophy. He conceived the project of a general history of the earth, and announced it in the newspapers of the day, begging learned men of all nations to help him with contributions of the results of their own researches.

In 1721, just six years after the death of Louis XIV., when France had outlived the lethargy of the last years of the great reign, and the orgies of the regency were in full swing, Montesquieu published his *LETTRES PERSANES*. The book was suited to the age, for its author wished it

to be read ; but light and satirical as it appeared to superficial readers, it was full of great questions and deep truths. It assumed to be a series of correspondence with Persians residing in Paris, Venice, Ispahan. The whole was woven together by the story of a voluptuous intrigue, which excited the curiosity of the readers of the regency. Religion, philosophy, government, commerce, finance, agriculture, marriage, political economy,—all were touched upon ; the dress in which they were clothed was the tribute which even great intellects pay to public taste and opinion. The tone of the book was light, trenchant, scornful. Everything was to the writer either provocative of ridicule or worthy of pity. It was the first outlook into the world of a young mind, which could not as yet see far enough to discover the “spirit of good in things evil.” The author of *L’ESPRIT DES LOIS* may perhaps by and by fall into an opposite extreme. His first work may be considered as a mocking programme, to which his last was to give a serious answer.

The *TEMPLE DE GNIDE*, which succeeded it, was so well received that its author determined to sell his position of President and devote himself to literature. This happened in 1726. Soon after he was elected a member of the Academy, but in order to enjoy this honour he was obliged to disavow some passages in his *LETTRES PERSANES* to the Cardinal de Fleury, who was persuaded to read an expurgated edition.

But Montesquieu was not satisfied with the views of human nature his reading of the ancients and his life in *salons* opened out to him. He determined to visit the different nations of Europe, and study them in their own homes. He first went to Vienna. There he found life at court was as polished as in France. He mixed with the people, and passed on into Hungary. Thence he

visited Italy, and spent some time in Florence and Venice, in which last city he fell in with Lord Chesterfield. The two friends went together to Holland, and so on to England. Here Montesquieu stayed two years, returning to France in 1731. Once again in his own country, he shunned the brilliant distractions of society, and, like all the great men of his day, retired into solitude. In the quiet of his own *château* of La Brède, he worked at his *CONSIDÉRATIONS SUR LA GRANDEUR ET LA DÉCADENCE DES ROMAINS*, which he gave to the world in 1734. This work is a marvel of brevity and conciseness—its style is simple, nervous, dignified. It was written, as we have seen, far from the stir of business and passions and the frivolous hum of a court, and the writer realises vividly and describes eloquently things that the luxurious ease of the eighteenth century did not dream of.

Twenty years of study and research passed over his head, and then in 1748, the very year of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, appeared *L'ESPRIT DES LOIS*. "Its publication," says Villemain,<sup>1</sup> "divides the eighteenth century by a remarkable date. No new work of genius could be written with more moderation and reserve; no independent spirit was less of an innovator than Montesquieu. The very breadth of his studies and his mind disposed him to impartiality; and he had by natural disposition that ardent, intractable conviction, which makes reformers. . . . Notwithstanding some expressions here and there, inexact according to our ideas from their very materialism, the character of his book is generous metaphysic. Succeding to the light and brilliant epicureanism and scepticism of the eighteenth century, the *ESPRIT DES LOIS* began the spiritualist reaction which Rousseau carried on."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *COURS DE LITTÉRATURE*, vol. i. ch. xv.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem.*

The political opinions of Montesquieu have something of the indolence of fatalism. Hence the exaggerated influence he attributed to climate. Hence, too, the entire submission he recommends to the existing state of things. He urges toleration, and civil and political liberty. The English constitution was his *beau idéal* of government. He made it a model and a subject of envy to all Europe, and explained it as no Englishman has yet done. Our ancient monarchical institutions have never before or since received so hearty a tribute of admiration and appreciation. The influence of L'ESPRIT DES LOIS was immense, though not immediate. Its contemporaries welcomed it coldly; political reform left it far behind; but half a century afterwards almost every nation of Europe ranged itself under that constitutional form of government of which this book had been the herald. Of the three successive phases common to every social revolution,—action, reaction, transaction,—Montesquieu represented the last.

Another striking feature of this remarkable book is its respect for human life. Pascal, indeed, in his letter on HOMICIDE, had preceded him in this, but we know how indifferent on this subject were the courtly and elegant Frenchmen of that day; how little they troubled themselves about “those Breton peasants who were never tired of being hanged.” Montesquieu did not wish absolutely to restrain the utmost penal power of the law, but he recommended clemency and equity, and in his own century Tuscany abolished capital punishment.

“I am overcome with weariness, I hope to rest the remainder of my days,” wrote Montesquieu after he had finished his book. His sight, never very strong, threatened to give way beneath his close application. He abandoned study, and led a simple country life at La Brède, looking after his fields and his vines. England

appreciated his book,<sup>3</sup> and it delighted Montesquieu to know that she did so. Frederic of Prussia read it, and Montesquieu heard that he had expressed himself as differing from some of its maxims. The Sorbonne meditated a censure, but abstained. An ecclesiastical newspaper, the last depositary of the Jansenist spirit, set itself to criticise it, and Montesquieu forgot his weariness in order to answer. At sixty-three he wrote its defence, which is a masterpiece of wit and logic. On the 10th of February 1755, he died. His country was still calm, and governed by an absolute king; but philosophers followed him to his grave, and his death left Voltaire sole master of the minds of France.

**Buffon.**—George Louis le Clerc, Comte de Buffon, (1707–1788) did for nature what Montesquieu did for history. The study of the former, neglected by the Christian and exclusively social spirit of the seventeenth century, had been reserved to form one of the greatest glories of philosophy. It fell to Buffon's lot to add it to the great store-house of human knowledge. He and Montesquieu were the leaders of the moderate school of philosophy. He was born at Montbard in Burgundy, and at the age of thirty-two was named *Intendant du Jardin du Roi*. In the retirement of his own park of Montbard, and in the silence of the king's garden, he meditated upon and wrote that imposing encyclopædia of nature, his HISTOIRE NATURELLE, the fruit of fifty years of laborious study. Like Montesquieu, he had fled from the busy hum of men to labour at it. "The two great works of the eighteenth century," says M. Flourens, "are the fruit of genius courageous enough to live in solitude."

<sup>3</sup> Burke characterised Montesquieu as "a genius not born in every country or every time, with a Herculean robustness of mind and nerves not to be broken with labour."

Buffon conceived the plan of uniting in a vast whole the hitherto scattered knowledge of natural history. In order to do this, he set himself to study the composition of the globe, the theory of generation, and the whole of creation from man to minerals. Aristotle and Pliny had already made the attempt. The work, considerably enlarged by the greater experience of mankind, seemed too much for a single intellect. Buffon attacked it with all the audacity of an ancient philosopher. He united in himself the learning of Aristotle, the fine imagination of Plato, and the brilliant colouring of Lucretius; and created, not only for philosophers, but for the world at large, a science which had before hardly existed for naturalists themselves. His literary career began with the *THÉORIE DE LA TERRE* (1749), and ended with *EPOQUES DE LA NATURE* (1778) at the age of seventy. Flourens<sup>4</sup> remarks of these books that the first had "astonished the world," and the last had, more than any other work of the eighteenth century, "elevated the imagination of men."

Buffon was at once a disciple of Newton and of Descartes: at one time a careful observer of facts; at another, an adventurous hazarder of generalisations. His commanding reason bound him to the results of experience; his impatient genius seduced him into hypothesis. He himself warns his readers of "the great difference that there is between an hypothesis into which no possibilities enter, and a theory founded on facts." Often, it must be admitted, his genius seems to outstrip his observation; but subsequent research, proving the justice of some of his precipitate conclusions, half proves the truth of his own dangerous axiom that "the mind is the best crucible."

<sup>4</sup> Ch. I., *HISTOIRE DES TRAVAUX DE BUFFON*.



The anatomist D'Aubenton, the Abbé Bexon, and Guesneau de Montbéliard, assisted Buffon in his work by their observations and contributions.

Great as was the knowledge displayed in the HISTOIRE NATURELLE, it was its style that made its reputation. Buffon himself said in his speech on his reception as an Academician, "the style is the man himself," and his own writings prove that it is so. Majestic and stately, it was like the life of the *grand seigneur* at his château of Montbard. As we read it, we can almost picture him at his work: his powdered wig, his lace ruffles, his costly dress, his noble appearance, his *grand air*. We can fancy him on Sundays, in those days which were so soon to end, passing across the hereditary lands of the Counts of Buffon to the simple country church where his ancestors slept. The procession is as solemn and dignified as the development of his HISTOIRE. The chief walks first accompanied by the Capuchin, his confessor and steward. The vassals, whose forefathers have served for long centuries the lords of Montbard, and over whom their descendant has still almost the power of life and death, follow at a respectful distance. His mien is haughty, and his air is one of conscious superiority. The stiff solemnity of the court of the great Louis has not yet died out of France, nor the redundancy of epithets in which his courtiers delighted. D'Alembert impatiently blamed Buffon's description of a horse. "Don't talk of your Buffon," he exclaimed, "who, instead of simply mentioning a horse, says, 'The most noble conquest that man has ever made is that of this proud and fiery animal, who shares with man the fatigues of war and the glory of battle.'" Voltaire, hearing some one speak of Buffon's NATURAL HISTORY, remarked, with the piquant wit for which he was so famous, "Not so natural." "M. de

Buffon," said Madame Necker, "could not write on unimportant subjects: when he tried to put his grand dress on little objects, it creased and wrinkled all over."

It is true that the more lofty the subject, the more Buffon is at home. He delights in describing "those deserts without verdure or water; those sandy plains over which the eye roams and sight loses itself, without finding any living object on which to rest." The style rises to the subject when he makes conjectures on the primitive state of the globe. He says that "the archives of the world must be ransacked, and old monuments dragged from the bowels of the earth," before he can "fix some points in the immensity of space, and set up a certain number of mile-stones on the eternal highway of time."

He has, however, more imagination than sensibility and more nobility than emotion. His writings are like sparkling stalactites, coldly splendid. They are without religious sentiment. Beneath the magnificent veil of natural phenomena, he does not make us feel the presence of God. That sacred Name indeed sometimes occurs, but His thought rarely; and nature, shorn of its divine soul, strikes us as dreary in its majestic and inexorable grandeur. How different from the learned Swede, whom Buffon did not appreciate! Linnaeus possessed the power of enthusiasm, and, notwithstanding his faulty and barbarous Latin, led his readers "to look through Nature up to Nature's God." Buffon, in his intense subjectivity, belongs to the school of Locke and Condillac. Like them he makes all ideas come by the senses, and one of his most brilliant pages<sup>5</sup> surpasses the famous hypothesis of the progressively animated statue. He is, however, but a moderate and inconstant disciple of the sensualistic school,

<sup>5</sup> Vol. iii. p. 364.

and sometimes is in direct opposition to it. "Sentiment," he says once, "cannot in any degree produce reasoning." Buffon was drawn to the philosophical party by the inspiration of the age in which he lived; but he never joined himself to it entirely.

## CHAPTER XX.

### END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

**Bernardin de Saint-Pierre.**—That which had been wanting to the glory of Buffon insured the success of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Buffon had seen in nature only a marvellous machine; de Saint-Pierre saw in it a beautiful poem. His *ÉTUDES DE LA NATURE* is a pious hymn. He was no naturalist; his opinions are erroneous; his reflections paradoxical; but his pictures are enchanting, his poetry is of extreme beauty. He wrote in an age when France had no real poet, when her literature was falling into decay, when nature had no votaries, and God but few worshippers. De Saint-Pierre was a poet, a master of expression, a lover of nature, an adorer of God.

The poetry so-called of the eighteenth century was either pompous or epicurean. Voltaire furnishes an example of both. Even in the seventeenth century, La Fontaine was almost the only living painter of nature, and La Fontaine had been born and brought up in the picturesque Chateau-Thierry, and had grown old amongst the stiff avenues of Versailles. Fénelon's descriptions were copied, not from nature, but from the idylls of Greece and Rome. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had studied nature herself in the most favoured spots of the earth.

His life was a romance. He was born at Hâvre in

1737, on the smiling shores of the winding Seine, amongst ships of all nations and travellers in all lands. His studious, dreamy childhood was remarkable for his love of the country and of solitude. His favourite reading was the *LIVES OF THE FATHERS OF THE DESERT*. This book filled him with an enthusiasm of loneliness, and the child of nine was stirred with a desire to imitate the old anchorites he read of in it. His Thebaïd shall be a favourite haunt, a wood about a mile from his home. One morning he is despatched to school, his breakfast, as usual, packed in a little basket. This shall be the food of the baby-hermit. Instead of going to school, he strays to the wood, resolved to spend his life there! Alas! evening comes, and with it a servant to seek the little runaway, and the child-anchorite is carried off to his home. For three years the boy pores over books of travels, greedily devouring all he can lay hands upon. The desire to be and to do something more than the ordinary boys about him grows with his growth. The longing to be a hermit has changed into the longing to travel. At twelve years old he persuades his parents to let him accompany an uncle in his own vessel to Martinique. He comes back only half satisfied, and is sent to the Jesuits at Caen. There he listens with delight to the stories the Fathers read aloud of India, and China, and Japan,—of the missionaries and martyrs of their Order. Once again the enthusiasm of the boy is kindled, and the ardent young spirit frets at its commonplace life. Why should not he, too, be a missionary, and do great things in the way of converting souls to God, more especially, too, as it will enable him to see those wonderful countries of which his dreams are full? This will combine something of the two old longings,—the solitary life of the Fathers of the Desert, and the wandering through strange

lands. But this time his parents will not listen, and the young man returns to his studies. His proficiency in mathematics soon earns for him an honourable post, and he is sent as an engineer to the army in Germany. He returns to France to project reforms and improvements, which are badly received. Disappointed and in want, he leaves Paris in disgust, and sets out for Lake Aral, on the shores of which he will form a colony, whose happiness and prosperity shall teach his ungrateful country how blessed a thing it is to be free from the trammels of convention and the vices of society. On his way, this dreamer of a Utopia stops at Amsterdam, and begins a very successful career as a journalist. His nomadic instincts, however, pursue him, and drive him on: to Lübeck, Cronstadt, St Petersburg. He reaches the shores of the Neva to find himself penniless and alone, but with the thoughts of his colony warm at his heart. His good genius brings him somehow or other to the notice of one of Catherine's generals, who sends him to Moscow. Here he is introduced to Catherine, and to the Mécenas of her court, the regicide Orloff. Orloff, charmed to have to do with a countryman of the Encyclopædists, offers him place and fortune. But none of his offers can seduce de Saint-Pierre from his visionary colony. He accepts, however, a military mission to Finland, and returns to Moscow to find his protector out of favour, and his beloved colony farther off than ever. The licentious and barbarous court of Catherine shocks this modern Plato. He throws up his commission in her army, and goes to lend his enthusiasm to oppressed Poland. Restless and roving, he does not remain there long. He visits Austria, Poland a second time, Saxony, Prussia. The military despotism of this "huge barracks" disgusts him, and once again, after six years of wandering, he returns to his native land,

penniless and friendless. These six years had developed his genius, and drawn out the marvellous power of his imagination. He returns, however, only to take up a humble post in a government office. Here his active mind is full of plans,—plans to save Poland from being blotted out of the map of Europe, plans to reach India by a new passage, plans for colonising Madagascar. At last, the first dawn of prosperity glimmers in his sky. He is sent to the Ile-de-France, with a secret order to be on the look-out for an opportunity of realising his project of colonising Madagascar. This realisation never comes. The sensitive and haughty de Saint-Pierre, after various quarrels with his superiors, returns to France,—poor in purse, but rich in the possession of the sweet pastoral he is to give to the world under the title of *PAUL ET VIRGINIE*. In Paris, de Saint-Pierre makes the acquaintance of Rousseau, who had passed through trials so similar to his own. They become friends, and Rousseau's story of his life deeply influences the young author. It is Rousseau, too, who inspires him with a taste for the literature of the ancients, which makes chords of sympathy vibrate in his soul no modern book had ever touched. For de Saint-Pierre had but little fellow-feeling with his age, or his age with him. A society which hated Rousseau must necessarily have hated de Saint-Pierre. How tame and absurd must the life of virtue and innocence described in *PAUL ET VIRGINIE* have appeared to the unbelieving sybarites of the Paris of the eighteenth century!

It is related that his first reading of the story was at the house of Madame Necker. A select company of critics was assembled. Thomas listened coldly, Buffon called loudly for his coach. The hostess herself hardly deigned a word of praise, and the ladies present blushed that they had not been able to keep back their tears at

the pathetic story of the pure love of two children. The author went away discouraged, and sought for consolation in his friend Vernet. The artist was delighted with the descriptions of tropical scenery, and spoke warmly to de Saint-Pierre. This revived the flagging spirits of the disheartened author, and he took his other work, *ÉTUDES DE LA NATURE*, the round of the most celebrated publishers in Paris. For some time it was refused; but at length it found a publisher, and the reading world was charmed. *PAUL ET VIRGINIE* followed, and, despite its cold reception at Madame de Necker's, made even a greater sensation than its predecessor.

At last de Saint-Pierre was famous. His fame and his philanthropic opinions recommended him to the leaders of the Revolution which had now burst, and he was made director of the *Jardin des Plantes*. Bonaparte wrote to him with his own hand from Italy, and on his return as a conqueror to Paris visited him frequently, and invited him to dinner. He died in the year of Bonaparte's abdication.

As we have said, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre was a poet. He was likewise an ardent believer in God and in the immortality of the soul. Like all great thinkers, he desired the amelioration of the human race, and though most of his dreams were somewhat unpractical and Utopian, some, such as the freedom of the blacks, were possible and beneficent. His style was harmonious and simple, sometimes almost archaic, belonging more to the sixteenth than to the eighteenth century. The religious sentiment conspicuous in all his writings was well-nigh unknown to his own time. He is the only writer of his day who delights in quotations from the Scriptures, and who describes with emotion a religious ceremony. It is this susceptibility to mystical impressions and his love of



nature which give such an individuality and originality to his pages: his fine imagination and his brilliant colouring combine with them to make him one of the most charming writers and touching poets of France.

**The two Chéniers.**—While de Saint-Pierre was writing his *PAUL ET VIRGINIE*, two brothers, André and Marie Joseph Chénier, were pursuing their studies at a college in Paris. They had been born at Constantinople, where their father was French consul-general, of a Greek mother, who has herself made a charming contribution to literature in the shape of two *LETTERS*, one on the *DANCES*, the other on the *FUNERAL CEREMONIES*, of Greece. André Chénier, the elder of the two brothers, fell a victim to the Reign of Terror at the early age of thirty-two. His first poem was a pæan of joy on the sitting of the *Jeu de Paume*. But his enthusiasm was soon cooled by the crimes of the revolutionary party. He had set out with noble ideas of liberty and justice, and for these he would have risked his dearest interests. So when innocent blood flowed in the streets of Paris, André did not hesitate to condemn the leaders who were responsible for it. He ceased not to proclaim his theories of liberty, but he employed his pen in attacking the sanguinary tyrants who so little understood what liberty meant. His head was the price he paid for his noble and undaunted courage. Just three days before that 9th Thermidor, which would have brought him his release, he was guillotined. The turnkey who came to summon him to the scaffold found him writing verses. The fragment has been preserved.

André Chénier, in his short life, regenerated French poetry by introducing into it the genius and eloquence of Greece. He had spent three years in England, and learned to appreciate our great dramatist, to whose influence he seems to owe the masculine vigour of some of his verses.

HIS IDYLLS, ELEGIES, and FUGITIVE PIECES which remain to us, show us what he might have been if death had not so soon cut short his poetic career.

His brother, an ardent partisan of the Revolution, wrote several tragedies, which hardly rise above mediocrity; and in the present day it is difficult to imagine the enthusiasm which his lyrics excited.

**Beaumarchais.**—Beaumarchais, who has been called a “second Voltaire,” was the author of curious MÉMOIRES, which sparkle with sarcasm and wit. M. Villemain says of them: “This singular book must be looked upon as a compound of judicial memoirs, pamphlet, comedy, satire, romance. We can see in it, as in the author himself, a blending of all contrasts,—a something rare and equivocal,—a talent, admirable indeed, but more worthy of fame than of esteem,—an enthusiasm of pleasantry, which, though it carries us away, sometimes revolts our sentiment of decency and truth.” The ridicule of Beaumarchais was a more formidable enemy of the PARLEMENT MAUPEOU than the grave and patriotic remonstrances of Malesherbes, whose firm and respectful complaints are distinguished by a moral elevation and an austere eloquence which the magistrature of France seemed to have long forgotten.

**The Revolution.**—It was thus that, hurried on by men of all shades of opinion and all degrees of power, the great Revolution burst over France. The day of theories, that is, of men of letters, had now set,—that of men of action had dawned. Political oratory, *magna illa et oratoria eloquentia*, which had been only as an ancient memory to France, was about to become a power. Three political assemblies outdid the most stormy scenes of the Forum or the Agora. The history of this eloquence belongs more to politics than to literature. Never was a more illustrious career opened to ambition and oratorical

energy. France was agitated by what we may almost call a madness of great ideas. She would regenerate the world; she would destroy and reconstruct; her voice should penetrate to the uttermost parts of the earth. And this voice, which was to reach so far, was first breathed in her National Assemblies. No wonder that twelve hundred men, with burning passions and new-born hopes, should have presented a spectacle the modern world had never seen. No wonder that this modern world was moved to her very heart's core. We, at a safe distance, tremble as we marvel. We know now how little was really done in the vaunted work of reconstruction. We know now that it was found much easier to pull down than to build up. But still, violent and disorderly as it was, it was here that a new school of French oratory had its rise. There was the Right Side, devoted to the old order of things: Maury and Cazales, and the younger Mirabeau. There was the Left, vowed to the new ideas of the *CONTRAT SOCIAL*: Duport, Lameth, Siéyès, Barnave. There was, too, the Centre, "Anglomaniac Constitutionalism, or Two-Chamber Royalism," the disciples of Montesquieu and of Voltaire: Mounier, Malouet, Lally-Tollendal. And over and above them all rises the genius of modern eloquence, inaccurate, powerful, sometimes sublime, who alone united in himself popular passion and political intelligence, the leader of a democratic assembly, the adviser of his king, the outcast scion of a noble house,—the profligate Comte de Mirabeau.

The Legislative Assembly, intruded between the two great revolutionary reunions, was illustrated by the unfortunate philosopher Condorcet, the proclaimer of the indefinite perfectibility of the human race, the admirer and biographer of Voltaire; and by the eloquent and unhappy Girondists, Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné, intoxicated with

enthusiasm and the paradoxes of Jean-Jacques. At its doors already roared Danton and Robespierre.

It is the fate of every revolution to be pushed to its extreme limits and to lose itself by its own excesses. The philosophical movement of Voltaire had fallen as low as Helvétius and d'Holbach. The Convention, after sacrificing all it possessed of greatest, came down to Robespierre and Marat. Such names as these last can have nothing to do with a history of literature. When a wretched monster goes in his madness the length of asking for two hundred and seventy thousand heads in order to insure peace, he deserves no other history than the gaoler's book and the headsman's register.

It was thus that a revolution, prodigal in its infancy of high thoughts and hopes, died in blood and mire. In spite of terrible faults, it did great service to its country. Abused privileges destroyed, national unity founded, liberty of conscience recognised, the equality of all in the eye of the law accepted, torture abolished, trial by jury established, national education attempted and admitted in principle, industry and commerce freed from injurious restraints, all future progress become possible,—such are the precious fruits of the many labours, the many thoughts, and the many bold and eloquent writings which make up the literature of the eighteenth century.

## FIFTH PERIOD.

### *Nineteenth Century.*

#### *CHAPTER XXI.*

#### THE FIRST EMPIRE.

WHILST the audacity of the philosophers of the eighteenth century was undermining the foundations of monarchy and religion, a far less august power had escaped their attacks. Alone of all the traditions of the age preceding his own, Voltaire had respected that of literary form; and in imitation of him, the whole school of philosophers had vowed an almost superstitious reverence for the rules and usages of the art of writing. Scarcely a single, isolated act of insubordination can be chronicled, and the occasional avowal of disaccording doctrines was so rare that it passed as a harmless paradox almost unnoticed. The famous disputes of the seventeenth century as to the pre-eminence of the Ancients and the Moderns had been silenced by graver preoccupations. Lamotte, Diderot, and Beaumarchais had each in turn aimed attacks,—partial, inadequate, and even mistaken for the most part,—at the dramatic system of their countrymen, but in vain. Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, though they did much more for the reform of literature by reviving moral sentiment and

a passionate love of nature, failed to found a school. They wrote on as striking exceptions in the midst of a literature witty rather than simple, solemn rather than impassioned, waiting for unborn posterity for their renown. Indeed, they did not exercise themselves in any of the time-honoured styles of poetry, which their genius might have endowed with new beauties. Tragedy, epopee, ode, —every form of versification,—was left to the disciples of Voltaire, the feeble, if elegant, disciples of Racine. To them belongs almost entirely the epoch of the Empire in which that school of poets flourished,—imitators of imitators,—justly called the Classics of the Decline.

**Descriptive Poetry.**—The reign of Napoleon I., like the time of revolution which preceded it, was but little favourable to the imaginative arts. Great things were done, not written. Epopee was everywhere but in poetry. The uncomformable guardianship of political power destroyed the originality of the arts she would have sheltered. Writing, no longer a matter of inspiration, became a trade. Soul was superfluous for a poet. A correct ear and taste, and an acquaintance with literature, was all that was necessary. A style of poetry, didactic and descriptive, which invariably flourishes in times of literary decay, and of which at this period Saint-Lambert (1770) had been the harbinger, sprang up under the Empire.

Jacques Delille<sup>1</sup> was the head of this new school, and by dint of wit, choice of language, and grace and coquetry of thought, he succeeded in blinding the eyes of most of his readers to the faults and want of true poetry in his lines. For thirty years Frenchmen placed him beside, if

<sup>1</sup> 1738–1813. His principal works are, *LES JARDINS*; *L'HOMME DES CHAMPS*; *L'IMAGINATION*; *LES TROIS RÈGNES DE LA NATURE*; *LA CONVERSATION*; *LA PÎTÉ*; and translations of the *GEORGICS*, the *ÆNEID*, and the *PARADISE LOST*.

not above, Homer. He himself, at the close of his career, conceitedly reviewed his descriptive trophies, and boasted that he had made twelve camels, four dogs, three horses, six tigers, two cats, a chess-board, a backgammon board, a billiard-table, several winters, many more summers, a multitude of springs, fifty sunsets, and more dawns than he could possibly count. He would have done more wisely had he congratulated himself on his really elegant translation of the *GEORGICS*, which Chateaubriand has compared to a picture of Raphael marvellously copied by Mignard.

In the *suite* of Delille followed even less gloriously the gifted and elegant Fontanes, author of *LE VERGER*; Castel, of *LES PLANTES*; Boisjolin, of *LA BOTANIQUE*; Esménard, of *LA NAVIGATION*; Gudin, of *L'ASTRONOMIE*; Ricard, of *LA SPHÈRE*; Aimé Martin, of *LETTRES À SOPHIE SUR LA PHYSIQUE, LA CHIMIE, ET L'HISTOIRE NATURELLE*; and Cournaud, of a poem on *LES STYLES*. The drier the subject, the more credit the poets took to themselves for attempting it. Poetry was only prose encumbered with metaphor. Hence that aversion to the simple, natural name of a thing, and that constant use of circumlocutions, which makes some of the poems of this period a tissue of well-nigh insolvable enigmas.

Nor were these wearisome descriptions confined to descriptive poetry, properly so called. Epic poetry, tragedy, ode, all alike abounded in endless tirades and high-flown metaphors.

The most distinguished so-called epic poet of the First Empire is Parseval de Grandmaison, a disciple of Delille, whose *PHILIPPE AUGUSTE* reached a third edition.

Romance, as more congenial to the existing state of things, flourished better. Platitude of style and thought, overlaid with a coating of moral polish, was represented

by the hundred volumes of Mme. de Genlis ; and coarse and undisguisedly licentious wit by the writings of Pigault-Lebrun. Fiévée, Vindé, and Montjoie possess some of the moral sentiment which inspired Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. The VALÉRIE of Mme. de Krüdner, notwithstanding that it is tinged with much of the false sentimentality then current, has something of the same charm as the writings of Mme. de la Fayette and Mme. de Flahaut-Souza, which, as well as those of Mme. Cottin and Mme. Montolieu, are characterised by noble womanly tenderness.

**Drama.**—The effeteness of the pseudo-classical literature and the urgent need of a reform was in no style more evident than in tragedy. The faulty system of bygone writers remained, without any of the genius and fire which had animated it, and redeemed it from mediocrity.

Dramatic intrigue became an experimental science that could be taught and learned. Alexandre Duval offered to teach a young poet to *charpenter une pièce*. Hence all the tragedies of that time bear a strong family likeness to each other. The problem to be solved is proposed in the first act ; the second act promises ; the third menaces ; the fourth trembles on the verge of solution ; the fifth solves. The absolutely indispensable accessories are a dream, a dagger, a conspiracy, and a poisoned cup. The diction is pompous for the most part, and metaphors and periphrases abound. The characters are all in the same style, finished masters of rhetoric, who always think what they ought to think, and never fail to maintain the thesis which the dramatic plot imposes upon them. Orestes and Hamlet would under such circumstances have spoken the same language. As Mme. de Staël justly remarks, "In time we shall see nothing on the



stage but heroic marionnettes, who sacrifice love to duty, prefer death to slavery, and are inspired by antithesis in their actions as well as in their words, without any connection with that astonishing creature called man, or with the redoubtable destiny which drags and pursues him by turns."

The most notorious of such writers of tragedy are Poinciset de Sivry, La Harpe, de Jouy, Baour-Lormian, and, more especially, Briffaut, who, having written more than half a piece with Spanish names, suddenly transferred the scene to ancient Nineveh, and with hardly any change called it *NINUS II*.

The tragedies of Marie Joseph Chénier, and notably his *TIBÈRE*, and the *TEMPLIERS* of Raynouard, are much superior, and manifest, if not poetic inspiration, at least the varied knowledge of a man of learning.

Perhaps the most remarkable tragic writer of the age was Ducis, who indeed belongs rather to the preceding century, for he died in 1816, and his dramatic career came to an end even earlier. No writer makes us so sensible of the barrenness of the system to which the tragic poets of that day were self-condemned. Endowed with a proud and independent genius, fully conscious in early youth of the beauties of Shakspeare, Ducis yielded by degrees to the tyranny of contemporary literary taste. A believer in an age without faith, a lover of solitude in the heart of a society refined almost to corruption, he fell into the slavery of the unanimous prejudices of his friends, the actors, and the public. Campenon corrected his verses for him. The actor Lekain refused to undertake his parts, alleging "the difficulty of making an audience, which had been long fed on the substantial beauties of Corneille and the exquisite tenderness of Racine, digest Shakspeare's crudities." The public reproached him with

his choice of MACBETH as a subject, asking for a "tender piece in the taste of *Inès* or of *Zaïre*."

The best of his tragedies, which are, as might be expected, inferior to his letters and fugitive pieces, is *ABUFAR*, in which the personal character and tastes of the poet have full play, imparting a charm of reality almost unknown in contemporary dramas. Thus, even in the eighteenth century, signs of a future reform in tragedy were apparent, and Letourneur's translation of Shakspeare, imperfect and unsatisfactory as it was, had the effect of making public taste waver in its wonted allegiance.

Comedy suffered less than tragedy from the narrow prejudices of the pseudo-classical school. The vices and foibles of human nature are too near the poet to leave room for a spirit of exclusiveness or the tyranny of a stereotyped plan. The most fertile and the best writer of comedy of the imperial epoch is Picard (1769-1828), the *Æsop* of the French stage, each of whose plays is a development of some maxim of common prudence or practical morality. His predecessors, Collin d'Harleville (1755-1806), Fabre d'Eglantine, and Andrieux (1739-1833), are inferior to him, though the comedies, and more strikingly the tales, of the latter, sparkle with wit and gracefulness. Beside these must be inscribed the names of Alexandre Duval, capable of excellent, small, unpretentious comedies, but quite incapable of the graver and more important pieces he delighted to attempt; the more ingenious Étienne, author of *LES DEUX GENRES*; and the would-be reformer, the enemy of the pseudo-classical school growing into importance before his very eyes, Nepomucène Lemer cier, who boasted that he was the inventor of *historical comedy*, the burlesque antithesis of the tragedy of Diderot, and who was incontestably the inventor of a new mythology in his *ATLANTIADÉ*, in which oxygen, caloric, gravitation,

phosphorus, and the like, figured with Greek names as new divinities.

**Lyrical Poetry.**—The best lyric poet of this epoch is Écouchard Lebrun (1729–1807), whose verses, though stilted and laboured, are not wanting in energy and precision, and who in another age and in a more congenial atmosphere might have taken a high place on the roll of French poets.

And yet those last years of the eighteenth century were soul-stirring and heart-moving times. Every life was a sad drama, every history a romance. The very air was “full of farewells to the dying and mournings for the dead,” and vocal with the cries of crushed hopes, and bruised affections, and unsatisfied yearnings. Even the wretched versifiers of the time struck chords of pathos and uttered real poetry. Delille wrote *LA PITIÉ*, and the exile Michaud showed a new sense of the beauties of nature in his *PRINTEMPS D'UN PROSCRIT*.

Love and friendship had been but as altars for whole burnt-offerings; human nature had shown to what nethermost depths of vileness it could sink; Nature alone—the impassible, the ever-beautiful—remained uninjured and unsullied. People began to distrust new ideas, and to shrink with horror from a philosophy which had been the watchword for so many atrocities. Nature was once again to do her greatest work, and to lure by her loveliness a heart-broken and faith-shattered people back to her and their common God. The First Consul opened the churches, and the nation pressed in crowds to all that was left them of martyred and banished dear ones,—the God of their fathers. At Bonaparte's permission, too, the home-sick exiles flocked back to France; and though the spirit of the eighteenth century was alive, and the fire it had kindled still burned, it kept quiet as though

in consternation at the work itself had wrought, and let the mass of the people return at will to its old beliefs and its old loves.

**Chateaubriand.**—Amongst the returned *émigrés* was a young Breton, the last of his race, François René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand. He had been born, September 4, 1768, in the quaint old town of St Malo. A dreamy and self-contained childhood had concentrated and strengthened passions naturally strong. Enamoured, like his contemporaries, of the doctrines of Jean Jacques, he conceived in early life an epopee of savage life. Abandoning all idea of taking holy orders, for which he had been carefully educated, he entered the army as sub-lieutenant at the age of eighteen, and three years afterwards was present at the capture of the Bastille. In Paris, he heard from La Fayette and his comrades marvellous stories of far-off America. Here was an opportunity of discovering the reality of the abstract theories of Rousseau. In 1791 he set sail to cross the Atlantic. He spent several months in the United States, had an interview with Washington, made a pilgrimage to the scene of the first battle in the War of Independence, and to Lexington, the *Thermopylæ of the New World*, visited Niagara, wandered through virgin forests and primeval wildernesses, across untrodden prairies and trackless savannahs, along giant rivers and liana-hidden water-courses, amongst untutored savages and unsophisticated children of nature. He returned home to endure, after a short service in the army of Condé, the miseries of exile. He tells the sad story of those eight years in his *MÉMOIRES*. Without fire in winter, and sometimes without bread, he and a party of fellow nobles suffered incredible privations. He found a wretched subsistence by translating for publishers, and giving lessons in French and Latin. He

published his first work, *ESSAI SUR LES RÉVOLUTIONS*, in London in 1797. It is full of a mournful scepticism, without any of the frivolity which characterised the writings of the eighteenth century. The next year his mother died, and her parting words and last prayers for her son so touched his heart that he returned to his allegiance to the faith of his race. "I wept, and I believed," he tells us himself. Such was the basis of his belief and the animating principle of his writings. He strove to make Christianity attractive to his readers, not because it is true, but because it is beautiful—a matter of sentiment rather than of reason. Voltaire had declared it to be ridiculous; Chateaubriand undertook to prove that it was sublime. "Truth," wrote M. de Bonald, on the subject of *LE GÉNIE DU CHRISTIANISME*, "in works of reasoning, is a king at the head of his army in the day of battle; in the work of M. de Chateaubriand, it is like a queen on the day of her coronation, surrounded by all that is graceful and magnificent."

It was in 1800 that Chateaubriand returned to his country. His friend M. Fontanes, who had recently been appointed one of the editors of the *MERCURE DE FRANCE*, brought out *ATALA* in the columns of his journal in 1801. The admiration it excited was universal. It was translated into every European language, and was even read in the seraglio of the Sultan. The Christianity it breathed woke in many hearts echoes that had long been dumb.

RÉNÉ added to the enthusiasm. The author, in giving utterance to the sentiments and experiences of his own heart, gave utterance to those of his time. The *GÉNIE DU CHRISTIANISME* appeared in 1802, and so charmed the First Consul that he gave Chateaubriand two successive employments, the last of which he threw up, at great

risk to himself, because of the execution of the Duc d'Enghien.

The reign of Napoleon I. was unfavourable to literature, and Chateaubriand, in the ten years that it lasted, only produced *LES MARTYRS*,—in which Christianity is opposed to Paganism, Jehovah to Jupiter, the Book of Genesis to the Odyssey; an account of a visit he made in 1806 to the Holy Land, *ITINÉRAIRE À JÉRUSALEM*; and *LE DERNIER DES ABENCERAGES*.

In 1814, on the fall of the Empire, he produced his famous pamphlet, *DE BONAPARTE ET DES BOURBONS*, of which Louis XVIII. said it had been equal, in its influence on the welcome the French people accorded to his family, "to an army of 100,000 men."

In 1822 our author entered upon public life as ambassador to the Court of St James'. The following year he was intrusted with the portfolio for Foreign Affairs, of which being somewhat unceremoniously deprived in 1824, he became a furious leader of the Opposition, till in 1828 he was sent as ambassador to Rome.

In 1830, the monarchy which Chateaubriand had helped to shake fell, and this inexplicable man became at once a defender of the cause which had no other defence. But he soon sank into the alarming despondency of which his *MÉMOIRES D'OUTRE TOMBE* give such unmistakable evidence, and on the 4th of July 1848 he breathed his last. A recent French writer has said of him, that "it seemed always to be his lot to lead a party whose ruling principle was not his; so that at the very time that he was crushing his enemies, he had no influence over his friends." Sentiment, imagination, and, it must be said, vanity, were his sole guides. He was full of brilliant contradictions. He said of himself in 1822, "I am republican by inclination, *bourbonien* by duty, and a

monarchist by reason." So he was a Catholic by sentiment, honour, and for the sake of "Auld lang syne," rather than from any deep religious conviction. His *NATCHEZ* is a curious proof of this want of unity and decision of purpose. He did, however, for Catholicism what—and indeed more than—Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had done for Deism; he reopened the springs of poesy, and began the moral and religious revival of the nineteenth century.

**De Bonald.**—While Chateaubriand was showing that, in company with many other great writers, his intellect was more powerful than his character, and that he possessed more imagination than decided opinions, two other authors undertook the task of demonstrating, with inflexible logic, all the consequences contained in the principle of absolute authority.

The first of these, Louis Gabriel Ambroise, Comte de Bonald (1753–1840), an *émigré* from 1791 to 1797, was the theoretician, if not the philosopher, of the party opposed to the Revolution. It was he who defined man as "an intelligence served by organs," and his philosophy, explained partially in divers works,<sup>2</sup> is contained in full in his *LÉGISLATION PRIMITIVE*. This work, though in opposition to the *CONTRAT SOCIAL*, has the same haughty dogmatism, and the same inflexibility in its axioms and deductions. Rousseau had placed sovereignty in the consent of the people; Bonald more happily placed it in the will of God. This will, he maintained, is communicated to us by language, which he asserts to be a divine gift, and which, changed and corrupted by the sin of man, is

<sup>2</sup> *THÉORIE DU POUVOIR CIVIL ET RELIGIEUX* (1796), *ESSAI ANALYTIQUE SUR LES LOIS NATURELLES DE L'ORDRE SOCIAL* (1800), *DU DIVORCE* (1801), *RECHERCHES PHILOSOPHIQUES SUR LES PREMIERS OBJETS DES CONNAISSANCES MORALES* (1818), *DÉMONSTRATION PHILOSOPHIQUE DU PRINCIPE CONSTITUTIF DE LA SOCIÉTÉ* (1830), &c.

yet to be found in its original purity in the Scriptures, of which the chosen people are the guardians and the Church the interpreter. There are but three things in earth and heaven,—cause, means, and effect. In metaphysics—God is the cause; the Mediator, the means; man, the effect. In religion—the Church is the cause; the clergy, the means; the laity, the effect. In the state—the king is the cause; the nobility, the means; the people, the effect. So in the family, there is the father, the mother, and the child; and in each individual, the soul, the senses, the body. Hence he establishes this general proposition, *The cause is to the means what the means is to the effect*; which he throws for general use into the algebraic formula,  $A : B :: B : C$ . It may be useless to add after this that his best friends admit “his too great tendency to dogmatise and to reduce everything to a formula.” Even the author himself calls his system “a political dream, which claims to take its place amongst many less innocent fictions and romances.”

**De Maistre.**—The second of the two chiefs of the theocratic school is Joseph, Comte de Maistre. A senator of Piedmont, and for a long time a Minister Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Sardinia at the Russian Court, he so loathed the excesses of the French Revolution, that he conceived an undying hatred for all so-called liberty, and took refuge in a theocracy as systematic as the wildest dreams of Gregory VII. or Innocent III. Villemain says of him,<sup>3</sup> “This strong, daring spirit did what greater geniuses than he have wanted courage to achieve: he followed, completed, exhausted, his own system.” His three works, *LES SOIRÉES DE SAINT PÉTERSBOURG*, *LE PAPE*, and *L'ÉGLISE GALLICANE*, are three indissoluble links of one chain. The natural perversity of man; the

<sup>3</sup> TABLEAU DU XVIII<sup>ME</sup> SIÈCLE.



need of expiatory suffering ; the sovereign despotism of an individual,—the Pope ; his supreme control over all the governments of the world ;—such are the unvarying and dominant ideas of his writings. It is Hobbes become a Catholic, or, as Lamartine has said, “ a savage Bossuet, an unlettered Tertullian.” Some of his pages breathe blood and torture. The softer parts, as, for instance, the introduction to the *SOIRÉES*, are due to the collaboration of his brother, Xavier, author of the *LÉPREUX DE LA CITÉ D'AOSTE*, and the charming *VOYAGE AUTOUR DE MA CHAMBRE*. Joseph was one of those men of narrow and inflexible minds, full of passion and vigour, with more powers of argument than clear-sighted reason, who, forgetting the many-sidedness of concrete truth, attach themselves obstinately to a single principle, which, by the exclusion of all others, they reduce *ad absurdum*.

A middle place between the school of Voltaire and the school of de Maistre was taken by the daughter of the celebrated minister Necker, the completest and perhaps the most brilliant representative of distinctive French genius.

Anne Louise Germaine Necker was born in Paris in 1766, and gave early evidence of her keenness of perception and depth of feeling. She was accustomed in childhood, in the *salons* of her father, to the society of the last remaining celebrities of the eighteenth century, Buffon, Thomas, Raynal, Sédaine, Marmontel ; and, like most of the young minds of France in that day, was an ardent disciple of Jean-Jacques. The society, too, of her cultivated father (who in 1788 published *LETTRES SUR LE CARACTÈRE ET LES ÉCRITS DE J. J. ROUSSEAU*) did much for the mental development of the impetuous and enthusiastic girl, while her temper and youthful spirits were left unchecked and uncontrolled. At the age of

twenty she married the Swedish Ambassador, the Baron de Staël, a man many years her senior, stipulating, at the same time, that she should never be compelled to reside against her will in Sweden. At the outbreak of the Revolution, Mme. de Staël looked forward with exulting anticipation to the bright day she thought she saw dawning for her country, but the excesses of the revolutionary party soon disgusted her, and she used all her influence to save the unhappy victims of their fury. After the murder of the king, she had the courage to publish a *DÉFENSE DE LA REINE*, which, as we know, was powerless to rescue the head of the *Autrichienne* from her bloodthirsty foes.

After the establishment of the Directory in 1795, Mme. de Staël once more drew around her the ablest and most accomplished men of France. In 1796 appeared her treatise *DE L'INFLUENCE DES PASSIONS SUR LE BONHEUR DES INDIVIDUS ET DES NATIONS*, which, though passions are considered from the point of view of happiness, and not from that of duty, shows a decided moral improvement in the author. In it she is no longer a brilliant and intelligent girl, who touches lightly on serious questions, the centre of an admiring crowd; but a woman with a mind that has thought and a soul that has felt. This pamphlet marked an era in her life. Cut off by her loveless marriage from the pursuit of happiness, she determined to strive for fame. "Since those," she sighs, "who would have been contented with affection are reduced to seeking glory,—well! it must then be attained!"

In 1800 she published a work, *DE LA LITTÉRATURE CONSIDÉRÉE DANS LES RAPPORTS AVEC SES INSTITUTIONS SOCIALES*, and in the following year a metaphysical novel, called *DELPHINE*, in which her friends, Benjamin Con-

stant, Mme. Necker de Saussure, and the cynical Talleyrand, appeared, while Delphine was the authoress herself.

The First Consul had, from the very outset of his accession to power, inspired Mme. de Staël with fear and dislike, and indeed her *salon* was a Cave of Adul-lam for the disaffected and discontented. In 1799, Fouché conveyed to her an intimation that her absence from Paris would be expedient. Upon this she retired to a house of her father's at Coppet, on the Lake of Geneva, whence she ventured to return from time to time to Paris. But in 1802, Bonaparte's suspicions being again aroused by her growing intimacy with Bernadotte, she cautiously remained at Coppet, till, as she hoped, her enemy was too wholly absorbed with the details of his proposed descent on England to have leisure to think of her. Then once more she crept out from her retirement, but still deeming it more prudent not to enter the capital itself, she settled in its neighbourhood, and was therefore much disconcerted when an order reached her forbidding her to appear within forty leagues of Paris. This to her was bitter exile. "French conversation," she mourned, "only exists in Paris, and conversation has been from infancy my greatest pleasure;" and with something of the longing of the Greek islander who refused to see any beauty in the Vale of Tempe where no ocean foamed, this poor town-bred woman, when shown the wondrous loveliness of the Lake of Geneva, would only moan, "*O le ruisseau de la Rue du Bac !*"

Denied Paris, she determined to visit Germany, where she made the acquaintance of Göthe, Wieland, and Schiller, and began the study of the German language and literature. In 1804, the illness and death of her father recalled her from Berlin; and this loss of the one

object of her affections seems to have strengthened her religious impressions, and had a beneficial influence on her undisciplined character.

Her next pilgrimage was to Italy, which fair land, with its noble relics of bygone ages, first awoke in her a love of art and some appreciation of the beauties of nature. *CORINNE*, published in Paris in 1807, was the fruit of this visit, and raised the author—the *Corinne* herself—to the height of fame to which she had aspired.

Before the publication of the book she had ventured once again to her beloved Paris, but peremptory orders soon drove her a second time to Germany, where she collected materials for her famous work on that country. In 1810 her sentence of exile was sufficiently relaxed to allow her to approach within forty leagues of the capital, and she hastened to avail herself of the privilege, in order to superintend the printing of this very work. Ten thousand copies were struck off, but they were at once seized and destroyed, the manuscript fortunately escaping.

Sentenced once again to banishment, the unhappy victim of petty tyranny wandered through Austria, Russia, and Sweden, and finally reached London, where she composed a narrative of her travels, which she called *DIX ANS D'EXIL*. She was received with enthusiasm in the highest circles in England—an enthusiasm which the publication of her *ALLEMAGNE* increased. Of this work the *Edinburgh Reviewer*<sup>4</sup> says, "It is unequalled for variety of knowledge, flexibility of power, elevation of view, and comprehension of mind, among the works of women, and in the union of the graces of society and literature with the genius of philosophy not surpassed by many among men."

In 1817, restored to Paris by the restoration of the Bourbons, she died, leaving behind her an unfinished

<sup>4</sup> No. xliii.

work, entitled *CONSIDÉRATIONS SUR LES PRINCIPAUX ÉVÉNEMENTS DE LA RÉVOLUTION FRANÇAISE*, which was an endeavour to show that France, like England, required a free government and a limited monarchy.

After Chateaubriand and Mme. de Staël, amongst the names of those who, under the Empire, ushered in a new generation, must be placed that of Pierre Paul Royer-Collard (1766–1824), the philosopher of spiritualism, who, though he left behind him no published works, and though he only held his professorship at the *Faculté des Lettres* for two and a half years, has yet by his two methods—scientific and historical—“created a school, and produced a movement which has survived him, and which will, we trust, have far-reaching consequences.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Th. Jouffroy, *FRAGMENTS DE ROYER-COLLARD*, iii. p. 312.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE RESTORATION.

#### INFLUENCE OF GERMANY AND ENGLAND.

It is difficult, not to say impossible, to write the history of a contemporary literature. How is it possible to understand and appreciate a movement of ideas which is not yet completed, or to judge men who, still living, have not yet uttered their last word? The reader must, therefore, be prepared for nothing more than a slight and rapid sketch of the most celebrated names, and a general summary of the spirit, of this yet unclosed period of French letters.

The *litterati* of France under the Restoration proposed to themselves the two objects—of very unequal importance, be it said—of re-establishing on a new basis the principles which the preceding age had so rudely shaken, and of overturning the one authority still untouched, that of conventional rules in literature. This work was indeed but the continuation and development of that of the eighteenth century, with this difference, that the new age affirmed positively that which the preceding had enunciated in a negative form: the one had rejected every unexamined doctrine, the other aimed at attaining to all tested and acknowledged truth.

This inclination towards what is true *per se* showed itself, more or less clearly, in all the different phenomena

of society. In politics, the *École doctrinaire* proclaimed the sovereignty of reason and the rights of natural capacity; in literature, the *École romantique* professed the universal *cultus* of the beautiful, without regard to the models and usages of the past; in philosophy, the *École eclectique* vowed itself to the impartial search, amidst the conflicting doctrines of all systems, for truth.

So, too, this same inclination, perverted and misunderstood, has been the origin of many of the mistakes we have ourselves witnessed in politics: it has produced the dogma of the arbitrary sovereignty of the majority; in literature, a coarse realism, to the detriment of idealism; and in philosophy, the pantheism of matter, in place of the adoration of the Infinite God.

This conflict of error and truth has caused that seething fermentation which afflicts France, and of which her literature gives so many proofs.

We cannot but think that the fifteen years of the Restoration will be regarded by posterity as a great and fruitful time. Not, indeed, that it can ever be considered equal to those periods of unity and harmony in which all the powers of the nation and the whole world of society, moved by the same impulsion, gathered the arts round them, and lived in their calm, clear atmosphere;—such, for instance, as the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, those epochs of a perfected organisation, on which thought delights to linger, as in some quiet resting-place. The nineteenth century is more like the sixteenth,—an age of activity, of violent fermentation, of strange alliances,—an age which has had set it the task of creating a literature which shall faithfully represent contemporary history. The means thereto are alike in both. Only in the sixteenth century there were the middle ages to be broken with; and the innovators took for their model Italy, and the antiquity

which she had reconquered. In our day it was the wretched and false imitation of the classics which had to be repudiated ; and Germany and the mediæval ages that she had never lost sight of, and was now investing with the charms of renewed youth, was the example proposed.

A great movement—literary and philosophical—had marked the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century in both Germany and England. Under the Empire Mme. de Staël had attracted the attention of France to the former country, and the sojourn of the allied armies in Paris had introduced into Parisian drawing-rooms the literatures of the north. In the first half of the eighteenth century a Gallo-mania had raged in Germany. The brilliant renown of Louis XIV. and his poets had fascinated all Europe. The little German courts had striven to imitate the splendour of the *grand monarch*. The gardens of Versailles were reproduced at Munich and Dresden ; the great forests were chopped and hewn into the regularity of a chess-board ; the noble northern pines were lopped into the likeness of antique vases. The Elector of Saxony in his *fêtes* assumed for himself and his court mythological costumes and rôles—Apollo, Venus, Nymphs, Hamadryads—as in the ballets at Versailles. The French refugees, expelled from their country by the Edict of Nantes, increased the influence of French manners. A Frenchman was the tutor of Frederic the Great, whose reign was that of Voltaire and French taste. A French academy was instituted at Berlin, and the national tongue and literature were alike despised.

Under such circumstances, the highest effort of German poetry was to be as French as it could. Gottsched of Leipzig was at the head of this French school. To him was opposed Bodmer of Zurich. The opposition of these two great men awoke Germany to fresh intellectual ac-



tivity, and gave a vigorous impulse to national literature, which had long languished. Moschzisker remarks<sup>1</sup> that "the confusion consequent on the 'Thirty Years' War' was severely felt in Germany, paralysing science and general culture, and that the spirit of poetry, up to the time of the Peace of Westphalia, was almost banished from the country." This is indisputably true, but war and politics were, notwithstanding, instrumental in re-awakening the genius of Germany. The "Seven Years' War," by alienating Prussia from France and drawing her closer to England, helped to quicken again the spirit of learning and national taste which the "Thirty Years' War" had well-nigh crushed to death.

In 1721, Bodmer and his friend Breitinger gathered together a learned society for the discussion of moral and literary subjects. This society soon brought out a weekly journal (*moralischaesthetisches*) entitled *DISKURSE DER MALER*,<sup>2</sup> in imitation of the English *Spectator*. The columns were soon opened to criticisms of Gottsched and his school. Gottsched was not long in defending his particular tenets. Three periodicals were started in three different places by him and his adherents, and Bodmer's Swiss dialect was attacked. The rivalry between these two parties—the English headed by Bodmer, and the French by Gottsched—became bitter indeed. Both sides fought strenuously, till at length the English school gained a signal and undoubted victory. To this victory, importing as it did a return to a more correct taste in all that concerns art, and a more healthy tone in all literature, the immortal Winckelmann, the founder of the German school of art-criticism, contributed in no small degree. Nor must the names of the epic poet, Klopstock, the intro-

<sup>1</sup> GERMAN LITERATURE, vol. i. p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> The name was changed in 1729 to *DER MALER DER SITTEN*.

ducer into German of hexameter verse, or of Lessing, who, in the words of Gervinus, "gathered to the maternal bosom the infant literature of his country, which till him had been nourished from the breast of a stranger-nurse," be forgotten.

These and others carried on the chain till German letters reached their zenith of perfection under Schiller and Göthe, who completely realised the ideal that the great critics we have spoken of had imagined. Schiller, as Göthe said, "preached the Gospel of Freedom," and Göthe himself, though admitting the famous precept of the *Three Unities*, refused to be bound by it. "The Greeks themselves, from whom the rule comes to us," he said,<sup>3</sup> "did not always follow it. . . . The plays of Shakespeare offend as much as is possible against the unities of time and place ; but they are full of *Fassliche* (*ensemble*). French poets have striven to obey exactly the law of the *Three Unities*, but they sin against the law of the *Fassliche*, since they develop a dramatic subject by recital, and not by the drama itself."

The combined influence of these two great men—as to the superiority of which Göthe remarked to Eckermann, the "public had been fighting for twenty years"—not only inaugurated a new era for German poetry, but was powerful throughout Europe. Schiller, the subjective, the impassioned lyric poet, had, as might have been expected, a greater effect on French literature than the more objective epic poet, Göthe. Besides them, France was influenced by the young *PLEIAD* of Göttingen, admirers and disciples of Klopstock ; by Bürger, whose ballads have been popularised on this side the Rhine ; by Hoffmann, Musæus, and Werner ; by the criticisms of the brothers Schlegel ; by the learned and original Herder ;

<sup>3</sup> Eckermann's *GESPÄRCHEN MIT GÖTHE*, b. i. s. 201.

and the erudite Niebuhr, whose attacks on the blind faith in traditional Roman history, almost universal before his day, have wrought a complete revolution in the domain of science, and opened to conjectural history, of which he is the founder, a career which seems never likely to have an end.

German genius is, however, diametrically opposed to French, and German literature faithfully reproduces the dominant characteristics of the German people, who are so totally unlike that Latin nation, now their deadly enemies. A constant endeavour to separate idea from action ; a preference for freedom of thought over government of things ; and hence a lofty boldness and a disregard of reality,—such are some of these characteristics. Added to this, action irritates opinions, and meditation calms them ; hence the noble impartiality of German genius, which excludes nothing, but seeks to reconcile all contrasts in the bosom of systems of illimitable vastness. Men assemble together to act, they isolate themselves to think ; so Germans have little taste for society. Their tact is less delicate than that of the French ; they fear ridicule less ; their writings possess more originality and independence, attain to higher truths, and fall more often into error. The divorce between thought and real life leaves the latter all its simple, and occasionally somewhat vulgar geniality ; hence a national good-nature and a frankness, which, though always sincere, is often rough and blunt ; hence, too, a devoted attachment to the old memories of Fatherland in the middle age in which its cradle was first rocked, and a heartfelt love, oft-times in very despite of reason, for that age itself. Germany is religious and mystical. The country of Luther, she admits faith only on condition that her liberty, so dear to her, shall not suffer. Her literature, an organ of all these

contrasts, is at once dreamy and impassioned, sublime and popular, learnedly naïf, and laboriously adapted to popular comprehension,—with all the sap of the literature of Athens, but without its simplicity, so that it more closely resembles the literature of Alexandria.

No wonder, then, that this northern exotic did not flourish on French soil. The effort to acclimatise it was not, however, without beneficial effect; it shook time-honoured prejudices, and stirred up in Frenchmen a desire to become again really French, as Germans had become again really German.

Before Germany invaded France, she stretched out the right hand of fellowship to England, and carried her along in her train. At the sight of the reawakening of German genius, Great Britain felt the old Saxon blood that had so long been sluggish pulsating in her veins. She remembered the "Morning Star of English Poetry;" and called to mind the "bright Elizabethan constellation." Bishop Percy employed himself in making his invaluable collection of old English ballads, of which Wordsworth says,<sup>4</sup> that while the English at large ridiculed them, and Dr Johnson spared no pains to bring them into contempt, "Bürger, and other able writers of Germany, were translating or imitating these Reliques, and composing, with the aid of the inspiration thence derived, poems which are the delight of the German nation." Walter Scott, too, the true "Last of the Minstrels," constituted himself the bard of the Middle Ages, and made

"Shield, and lance, and brand, and plume, and scarf,  
Fay, giant, dragon, squire, and dwarf,"

live again in the full blaze of the nineteenth century, and created historical romance.

The Lake School of England drew their inspiration and

<sup>4</sup> Preface to his Poems.

their devotion to the ideal from Germany. Of these none had greater sympathy with German metaphysical thought, nor a more rooted aversion to France and "that frightful jargon the French language," than Coleridge.<sup>5</sup> He visited Germany in the last years of the eighteenth century, in company with Wordsworth, and a second time alone thirty years afterwards. Both these English poets were quite familiar with German literature. Indeed, Coleridge's version of Schiller's *WALLENSTEIN* is one of the most effective translations of the works of the German dramatists in our tongue. Wordsworth's love of nature had something of the same tinge of pantheism as Göthe's. Byron, too, a widely different poet, professed a passionate devotion to Nature, in which he seemed to be for ever seeking the God he had lost.

Such, then, were the principal characteristics of the European literature of the early part of the nineteenth century: rebellion against arbitrary laws in poetry; a sad need of something in which to believe; a new-found sympathy with the Middle Ages; and a passionate love of Nature, animated by the half-unconscious hope of finding in her a new faith. We shall see that these characteristics extended to France.

The early years of the Restoration were as unproductive in literature as the days of the Empire. Politics absorbed all the powers of men's minds. But in time a change came. Catholicism, by a natural reaction, became the fashion. The monarchy sought for its rights, and literature for its inspirations, in the past. A taste for historical study arose. The Middle Ages were made the object of a new devotion. Gothic buildings and furniture became the rage.

<sup>5</sup> Coleridge, in a lecture on Poetry, delivered at the Royal Institution in the spring of 1808, thanked his Maker that he did not know a single word of "that frightful jargon," &c.

Soon a new sort of "Hôtel de Rambouillet" was formed, in which, says M. de Sainte-Beuve, "art was adored with closed doors, a new privilege was sought for in poetry, and a golden chivalry, a middle age of châtelaines, pages, and sponsors, a Christianity of chapels and hermits, was the theme of day-dreams." The works of foreign authors were rapturously welcomed by this coterie; Walter Scott was an especial favourite. Its mouthpiece was a periodical entitled *LA MUSE FRANÇAISE*, the pages of which, though they were open to all contributions from friends, specially affected sentimental poetry. André Chénier had indited a *chef-d'œuvre*, *LE JEUNE MALADE*, and he was imitated in scores of pieces: *LA JEUNE MALADE*, *LA SŒUR MALADE*, *LA JEUNE FILLE MALADE*, and so on *ad infinitum*; and the kindly critic pronounced that all these effusions, "notwithstanding the apparent uniformity of subject, had nothing in common but similarity of talent."<sup>6</sup> At last, however, the much-enduring MUSE herself was worn out and her patience exhausted by the appearance of *L'ENFANT MALADE*, whereupon she proclaimed that "from that day forth the working of agonies was forbidden for a long time to poetic commerce;" and one of the critics even went so far as to propose, as a definite termination for all this pharmaceutical poetry, the publication of an elegy entitled, *L'ONCLE À LA MODE DE BRETAGNE EN PLEINE CONVALESCENCE*.

Notwithstanding such absurdities, many of the pieces in the MUSE bore illustrious signatures,—Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Emile Deschamps, Mme. Tastu, Mme. Desbordes Valmore, and the two Gays, the youngest of whom was addressed by a learned Academician in the words of the old poet, *Matre pulchra, filia pulchrior*.

<sup>6</sup> *MUSE FRANÇAISE*, t. ii. p. 348.

The literary doctrines of the MUSE FRANÇAISE heralded the attempts at reform which were hereafter to make so great a sensation.

In opposition to this aristocratic party in literature was liberal opinion in its manifold shades, which, though it had not produced a school, had its own special sympathies and inspirations. It clung with greater or less tenacity to the traditions of Voltaire, felt keenly the degradation of foreign invasion, and, by way of consolation and revenge, celebrated the triumphs of the Empire. It had its own poets like its adversaries, from whom, indeed, it sometimes made converts and captures. If one side had its Chateaubriand, its Victor Hugo, and its Lamartine, the other had its Casimir Delavigne, and its Béranger. So, too, in prose the one had its Paul-Louis Courier, the other its Lamennais. The watchword of the one was religion; of the other, *patrie*.

Of Chateaubriand, the illustrious head of the religious and monarchical party, we have already spoken. Victor Hugo,<sup>7</sup> another distinguished member of the same party, was only twenty when he published his first volume of *ŒDES*, some of which he had written when he was not more than fifteen. Two years previously, in 1820, M. de Lamartine<sup>8</sup> had brought out his first *MÉDITATIONS*. He was then thirty years of age, and had felt in his own heart the storms of passion, and fathomed the hidden depths of his own soul, so that at last French literature had a poet of its own, whose life and works were not two distinct things, and with whom every creation of the mind had been first of all a real sentiment.

**Lamartine.**—Alphonse de Lamartine (whose original

<sup>7</sup> Born in 1802 at Besançon. Still (1873) living.

<sup>8</sup> Born at Mâcon in 1790; died 1869.

name was Duprat) was of noble birth, and was thus bound by strong ties to monarchical traditions. His earliest memories were of the Reign of Terror, when his father was imprisoned as a Royalist. After the fall of Robespierre, the boy's education was intrusted to the Jesuit fathers. For a short time he entered the military service of Louis XVIII., which he forsook, after the *Cent Jours*, for the career of a journalist. Forty-five thousand copies of his *MÉDITATIONS* were, we are told, sold within four years of their first appearance, so eagerly did the French reading public, wearied of the materialism of the Empire and the years preceding it, hail the appearance of a sentimental poetry. The early life of Lamartine had been well fitted to make of him a fervid and impassioned poet: his sad childhood, his religious education, his silently-nursed loyalty, and, above all, the exclusive devotion and tender care of his mother. Grown out of boyhood, he added to the study of Fénelon, Saint-Pierre, and Mme. de Staël,—the favourite authors of his early years,—that of all the greatest poets of Italy, England, and Germany. He visited Italy itself, and read the great writers—poets and historians—of mighty Rome amid the ruins of the Forum and the Coliseum. Not only was he the poet of sentiment and of beauty, he was also the poet of religion, of a revived spiritualism akin to that of Joseph de Maistre. This latter character was more marked in his *HARMONIES POÉTIQUES ET RELIGIEUSES*, published in 1830, than in any of his preceding works, though all had breathed, in a greater or less degree, the same religious ardour and devoted loyalty, and the same hatred of the Revolution and the Empire.

The year of the appearance of these *HARMONIES* marks the close of Lamartine's career as a poet. Henceforth he was to gain fresh laurels as a writer of political pamphlets



and of histories. Of these last the most important is the *HISTOIRE DES GIRONDINS* (completed in 1847), which shook the throne of the citizen-king, and fanned into flame the Revolution of 1848. He lived to see his popularity decline, and, driven from public life, he worked vigorously with his pen. His later works, however, are inferior,—hastily written for the sake of the money they could command, and tinged with a vanity and egotism that disgusted many of his former admirers.

**Delavigne.**—On the other side—that of the Empire and revolution—are the already-quoted names of Casimir Delavigne, and Véranger. The former of these<sup>9</sup> is a clever writer and an excellent versificator, but he is wanting in invention and in poetic idea. At fourteen he began to write poetry, and in 1811 he composed an ode on the birth of the son of Napoleon, which was presented to the Emperor on the occasion of his visiting the Lycée-Napoléon, where Delavigne was a student. This ode was the beginning of his fame; but his popularity reached its height on the appearance of the *MESSÉNIENNES* in 1815,—two poems, which were first circulated in manuscript, and were not printed till 1824. They possess some really striking passages, and deserved the favourable reception with which they met. They sang of the sad troubles of invasion, of the ancient glories of France, of the memories of unenslaved Greece, and the aspirations of Greece, once more set free—an utterance of the thoughts and hopes that lay so close to the hearts of *liberal France*. Hence *liberal France* received them with acclamations, which of necessity were as transient as the political situation which had called them forth. Of his many poems, the one which seems most likely destined to attain to immortality is *LA PARISIENNE*, which was born of the Revolution of 1830.

<sup>9</sup> Born at Havre in 1794; died at Lyons, 1843.

**Béranger.**—If Delavigne was remarkable for a want of invention and originality, the possession of these characteristics is the special marks of the genius of Béranger.<sup>1</sup> "My songs are myself," are his own words; ". . . the people is my muse." He describes simple pleasures and humble loves, and in his reactionary fervour hurls foul scorn at the "degraded wretches who caress Germans and Russians still covered with French blood." He professes an absorbing love for *la patrie*, and is the most French of all contemporary poets. Like the old *trouvères*, the instinct of the multitude is the mistress to which he is always faithful. For her sake he "renounces the pomp of words," and "collects his ideas in little varied compositions, more or less dramatic, calculated to seize the instinct of the vulgar." Every one of his songs has a distinct idea—true, ingenious, touching—for its centre. This centre is the refrain, a pivot on which all the details—the different stanzas—revolve. The refrain was to Béranger what the sonnet was to Petrarch, a form not invented by the poet, but eagerly seized upon by him as that most appropriate to the nature of his conceptions.

Thanks to his vocation of popular songster, Béranger became a poet eminently artistic. His study of the people had convinced him of the possibility—nay, even of the necessity—of opening the treasures of thought and imagination to the most humble ranks of society, and of speaking to the people in a language worthy of their future destinies. Many of his patriotic songs are true odes, some of them not inferior to those of Horace; and no other literature has anything comparable to his countless political poems, which, however much one may disagree with their tendency, none can deny to be inimitably perfect. Several of his pieces offend against common moral-

<sup>1</sup> Born at Paris, 1730.

ity and religion. His excuse for these faults is—"Without their assistance I am tempted to believe that they (his poems) would very likely never have travelled so far—neither so low down, nor even so high up,—let this last scandalise the virtues of the *salon* as it may."<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the question of literary innovation, which has lately produced such agitation, Béranger may be said to have solved the problem for himself. "The Greeks and Latins should not be models; they are torches." On the other hand, he sang—"Dread the Anglomania; it has already spoilt all. Do not go to Germany to seek for rules of taste." So that, when the new school raised its standard of independence, Béranger "applauded, at the same time blaming a little."

We have already said that in this first period of the Restoration, prose, like poetry, had its skilful writers and eloquent authors. The Royalist party had Charles Nodier; the Opposition, Paul-Louis Courier; the Ultramontane, the Abbé de Lamennais; the Liberal, Benjamin Constant.

Of these the first, Nodier,<sup>3</sup> a learned philologist, an inquiring naturalist, a passionate bibliophilist, and a charming story-teller, employed his incredible facility on a thousand different subjects, and wrote so much that he did not even know the names of all his works. The graces of language were his sincerest passion, and he attached himself in early life to the school already called romantic.

Paul-Louis Courier<sup>4</sup> was also a finished artist. His liberalism was of the narrowest and most *bourgeois* type. He saw nothing in the Empire but ridiculous pretensions, and in the Restoration only an object of paltry annoy-

<sup>2</sup> Preface of CHANSONS NOUVELLES ET DERNIÈRES.

<sup>3</sup> 1783-1844.

<sup>4</sup> Born in 1773; assassinated in 1825.

ances. The wit of some of his light sketches is inimitable. His *LETTRE À M. RENOUARD*, on the famous blot of ink on the manuscript of Longus, is one of the most ingenious and pungent witticisms ever written. He could not endure the style of the eighteenth century. He invented for himself a language—an ingenious mixture of that of the Greek authors, with whom he was more familiar than any man in Europe; of sixteenth-century French, which he cultivated with entire devotion; and of the plain and vigorous tongue of the people, which has so faithfully preserved the idioms of old writers. His style is often affected and unnatural—a learned combination of archaisms, not always obedient to the spontaneous emotions of the author.

The mere apparition, however, of such a writer was, more even than that of Nodier, a symptom of literary revolution.

While these two learned philologists were striving with patient industry to regenerate French prose, two other authors were proving by their example that the most fruitful labour, even in the interests of literary form, is that of thought. Lamennais<sup>5</sup> and Benjamin Constant<sup>6</sup> formed a striking contrast to each other—the one, an ardent defender of unity, sought for truth in the harmony of all intelligences, represented by social and religious authority; the other, passionately devoted to individual independence, only required of political and religious institutions a guarantee for the free development of all personal faculties.

The philosophic career of Lamennais himself presents in its different parts a contrast no less violent.

He had been sent in early life to live with a childless uncle. This old man, not knowing how to manage a spirited lad of twelve, used to shut him up for whole days

<sup>5</sup> Born at S. Malo in 1782; died at Paris in 1854.

<sup>6</sup> 1767–1830.

in his library, where prohibited books of sentiment and philosophy helped the boy to wile away the long hours of utter loneliness. The effect of such deep reading was early to mature the judgment of the child, and to intensify the religious ardour of his nature. Refusing to accede to his father's wish that he should enter on a commercial career, he found a place for himself, as a teacher of mathematics (1807), in the college of his native town of S. Malo. The following year, he published his first work, *RÉFLEXIONS SUR L'ÉTAT DE L'ÉGLISE EN FRANCE, PENDANT LE XVIII. SIÈCLE, ET SUR SA SITUATION ACTUELLE*, in which he uncompromisingly denounced the materialist philosophy of the eighteenth century, and the indifference to religion it had engendered.

He took the tonsure in 1811, was banished in the *Cent Jours* for a political pamphlet against Napoleon, and did not return to France till 1816, in which year he was ordained priest.

The following year he published the first volume of his *ESSAI SUR L'INDIFFÉRENCE EN MATIÈRE DE RELIGION*, a work which expressed one of the unuttered yearnings of his age; an age which was weary of the utter absence of definite belief, and disgusted equally with the three substitutes offered for it by fashion—a coarse atheism, an egotistic deism without social influence, or an inconsequent and illogical protestantism. The first volume of the *ESSAI* was entirely critical. The writer urged the absolute need of religion for individuals and for society at large, attacked the opponents of revealed religion, and, seizing the arms of Bossuet, sought to prove that the sects outside the Catholic Church were Deists rather than Christians. The work made a profound impression. It was long since the Church had had on her side a writer of such burning eloquence and such ardent enthusiasm.

The second volume exposed the positive side of the author's system, and proclaimed the dogma of authority in opposition to private judgment. Nor did he confine this authority to matters of religion; he extended its influence to all truths, sciences, arts, governments, morals, politics. For all such things, he maintained, authority is to be found in the opinion of the human race. Catholicism, true to its glorious name, is but the divine organisation of the universal suffrage of the whole world; the Pope is its infallible interpreter.

The very Church herself was dismayed at the great rôle proposed for her, and the trembling successors of Gregory VII. and Innocent III. disavowed their magnanimous champion. Henceforward, therefore, Lamennais, unable to effect a union between pontifical authority and the supremacy of the people, was driven to the latter. After the expulsion of Charles X., he cast in his lot with democracy, and, without swerving in his spiritual allegiance to the Church, attacked her temporal abuses. In September 1830, he brought out a journal, *L'AVENIR*, an organ of liberal Catholicism, to which, amongst others, Gerbet, Lacordaire, and Montalembert contributed. The opinions expressed in it drew pontifical censure upon the editor, who bowed to the Pope's authority by suppressing the paper.

In 1834 he produced his *PAROLES D'UN CROYANT*, for which he was excommunicated by Gregory XVI. and persecuted by the Government. This broke the last tie which bound him to his old principles, and pamphlet succeeded pamphlet, till in 1854, the author of the *ESSAI SUR L'INDIFFÉRENCE* died unreconciled to the Church, and was buried, by his own strongly expressed wish, without any religious ceremony.

As we have said, the career and principles of Benjamin

Constant are in striking contrast to those of Lamennais. The one was an ardent supporter of some absolute authority ; the other proclaimed always and in all things the independence of the individual. Constant was born at Lausanne, of a French family banished from their country in times of religious persecution, and was educated successively at Oxford, at Erlangen, and at Edinburgh. At the latter place he became acquainted with Mackintosh, Graham, Erskine, and other ardent young liberals, from whom he acquired the political principles which distinguished him through life. He conceived likewise a great admiration for the British Constitution, and a lively distrust of social force. He had been a witness of the abuses of the *ancien régime*, of the brutal excesses of the Reign of Terror, and of the harsh despotism of the Empire ; and he had learned to look upon government as a necessary evil, to be limited in such a way that it should do as little harm as possible. So, too, in religious matters. He held with Rousseau that religion is a sentiment in the heart of man, which seeks to unite him to God by an individual bond ; but he rose higher than the author of the *CONTRAT SOCIAL*, and instead of, like the philosophers of the eighteenth century, condemning the different sacerdotal institutions as so many systematic rogueries and deceptions, he saw in them so many more or less imperfect attempts to satisfy, by means of doctrine, symbols, and worship, the imperishable instinct which is ever drawing us to the Infinite. He desired to tolerate all religious systems as a portion of truth, but maintained that positive forms were in their very nature temporary and transient.

Constant was an intimate friend of Mme. de Staël, and was, like her, banished from France by Napoleon.

In 1819 he was elected deputy by the department of *La Sarthe*, and, till the time of his death, eleven years

afterwards, was considered the most eloquent parliamentary orator France had heard since the Revolution. His speeches in the Chamber were collected by Pagès in 1832 and 1833, and he published himself a collective edition of his political pamphlets, under the title of *COURS DE POLITIQUE*. His other works are *DE LA RELIGION CONSIDÉRÉE DANS SA SOURCE, SES FORMES, ET SES DÉVELOPPEMENTS*; two novels, *ADOLPHE* and *CÉCILE*; and a tragedy, called *WALDSTEIN*, founded on Schiller's *WALLENSTEIN*. In addition to these, a posthumous supplement to *DE LA RELIGION*,—*DU POLYTHÉISME ROMAIN CONSIDÉRÉ DANS SES RAPPORTS AVEC LA PHILOSOPHIE GRECQUE ET LA RELIGION CHRÉTIENNE*,—was published in 1838.

In closing this history of the first period of the Restoration, there is one reflection which rises unbidden to our minds. It is this,—that in the great work of social and religious reconstruction, which in France characterises our century, there has been some secret power at work, which, in spite of prejudices of family, of education, and of party, has led little by little to similar if not identical opinions the greatest intellects, no matter how dissimilar was the points from which they severally started. Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Lamennais, on one side; on the other, Mme. de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Béranger, Courier, are less far off from one another at the close than at the outset of their career. May we therefore fondly dream that the real unity of the French people is not so distant as political animosity and party selfishness would lead us to imagine.





## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HISTORY AND CRITICISM.

THE literary movement called *Romanticism*, the first efforts of which appeared in the *MUSE FRANÇAISE*, took strength and courage in 1824. It disengaged itself from its alliance with ultra-monarchical ideas, and grew daily more and more liberal. Chateaubriand, the chief of the party, ousted from office, went over to the opposition and the *JOURNAL DES DÉBATS*. Thereupon a society of young authors was formed, full of ardour, knowledge, and boldness, who edited for six years, with ever-increasing success, the *GLOBE*, the most important of all the periodical publications of the Restoration. The idea of it arose with M. Pierre Dubois, a young man of great promise, deprived in 1822 for his political opinions. To him its direction was intrusted, and the aim which he set before himself was that of defending, as a natural consequence of political liberty, liberty in everything,—of applying, in short, the principles of '89 to art, philosophy, and religion. With him were associated Pierre Leroux; the brilliant Sainte-Beuve, who opened the *Romantic* campaign with his *TABLEAU DE LA POÉSIE FRANÇAISE AU SEIZIÈME SIÈCLE*; Damiron, who published in a series of articles a *HISTOIRE DE LA PHILOSOPHIE AU DIX-NEUVIÈME SIÈCLE*; Jouffroy, who made his début in the eleventh number by

his famous article, *COMMENT LES DOGMES FINISSENT*; his pupils Duchâtel and Vitet, who contributed many papers, the one on political economy, the other on art; Charles Magnin; Patin; and Rémusat and Duvergier de Hauranne, who, after 1827, shared the toils of editorship with Dubois. The latter, however, reserved for himself the criticism of the French drama. M. Guizot had already revised the Shakespeare of Letourneur, to which he had added a remarkable preface, and the important collection entitled *CHEFS-D'ŒUVRE DES THÉÂTRES ÉTRANGERS*, and signed with such names as Barante, Andrieux, Nodier, Villemain, and Rémusat, had already made the public familiar with novelties and innovations which would once have scandalised them. The editor of the *GLOBE* lashed with unsparing criticism the stereotyped abstractions of the old imperial tragedy, and, far from inculcating a gross realism, sought to persuade tragedy to reach the ideal by the sheer force of truth and imagination. "The marvel," he says, "is to make figures that seem dead and inanimate in the pages of a chronicle relive; to find again by analysis all the shades of passion which made their hearts beat; to recreate their language and their costume. That is what Shakspeare did in all his historical pieces; that is what Racine did in his *ATHALIE*."<sup>1</sup>

Such was the spirit of wisdom and lofty criticism which inspired the *GLOBE*, and all that were interested in French literature hearkened to its lessons. Germany did not refuse its tribute of admiration. "I look upon this journal (the *GLOBE*)," said Göthe, "as the most interesting of our time; I could not do without it."<sup>2</sup>

The unanimity and harmony of spirit which characterised the writers in this paper especially excited the

<sup>1</sup> *GLOBE*, 1826. Analysis of the Tragedy of *MARCEL*.

<sup>2</sup> *GESPÄCHE MIT GÖTHE*, b. i. s. 249, Juni 1826.

warm approval of this patriarch of modern literature. Nor was this unanimity confined to the *GLOBE*. Guizot, Cousin, and Villemain, at the Sorbonne, had succeeded in giving to instruction almost the importance and weight of a political institution. When they reopened their courses of lectures in 1827 and 1828, all Paris welcomed them as the organs of free thought, and crowded to hear them.

Villemain<sup>3</sup> was distinguished by the charm of his language and the irresistible attraction of his wit. His colleague, Victor Cousin,<sup>4</sup> began his famous course on the History of Philosophy at twenty-four years of age. He had been at the age of nineteen a pupil of the celebrated Laromiguière, who had attempted to reconcile sensation and spiritualism, Condillac and Descartes. In 1813 and 1814, he attended the lectures of Royer-Collard, a follower of Reid, Hutcheson, and the Scotch philosophers, and instantly embraced his doctrine that the mind is independent of the senses; and when his master was called by Louis XVIII. to the Presidency of the Commission of Public Education, the young Cousin, then, as we have said, only twenty-four years of age, was appointed to the vacated chair of Philosophy. His youth deepened in his hearers the impression his genius made. His fellow-pupils Damiron and Jouffroy took their places at his feet. He not only lectured but wrote. He published a translation of Plato, the unedited works of Proclus, and a new edition of Descartes. He learned German, and studied Kant and Fichte. In 1817 he visited Berlin, Gottingen, Heidelberg where he made the

<sup>3</sup> Born in 1791. Works: *COURS DE LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISE; MÉLANGES HISTORIQUES ET LITTÉRAIRES; LASCARIS; HISTOIRE DE CROMWELL.*

<sup>4</sup> Born 1792 in Paris; died 1867.

acquaintance of Hegel, and Munich, the fountain-head of the philosophy of nature, in which place he was admitted to the society of the aged Jacobi and his friends. His lectures in 1818 were devoted to an examination of the German schools. In 1824, he made a second visit to Germany, on which occasion he was arrested at Dresden and imprisoned in Berlin, on a suspicion of Carbonarism. On his return to France, he published (1826) his *FRAGMENTS PHILOSOPHIQUES*, and excited an immense enthusiasm by introducing the system of Hegel to the notice of Frenchmen.

The teaching of Cousin,<sup>5</sup> though purely and severely philosophical, served as a crown and complement to the charming lectures of Villemain. Guizot attached himself to the great historical movement, which is the most incontestable literary glory of this period. Everything took an historical shape. Criticism opposed history to a degenerate poetry, and showed in the past the sources from which exhausted imagination might draw new supplies. History invaded all literature. Both Villemain and Cousin taught it. Guizot took such forcible possession of it, that he may be considered the head of one of the historical schools.

With the few exceptions already mentioned, such as Bossuet, Voltaire, Montesquieu, the historians of France had taken a place inferior to that of the writers in any other branch of literature. There had been a multiplicity of memoirs and collections, but few original works of profound and impartial reason. Most of the writers, like Vertot and Saint-Réal, saw, in the facts they set themselves to relate, nothing but an opportunity for amplifica-

<sup>5</sup> In his first work, *SUR LE FONDEMENT DES IDÉES ABSOLUES, DU VRAI, DU BEAU, ET DU BIEN*, he affirmed the independence of art, and established an absolute basis for aesthetics.

tion and ornamentation. The national history of France was totally ignored. An elaborate and deluding rhetoric had shrouded "the fourteen centuries of monarchy" with an impenetrable veil. All French kings were great monarchs, like Louis XIV. ; all illustrious captains were polished courtiers. Velly especially had distinguished himself by his ridiculous travesties of men and manners. His predecessor Mézeray had frankly avowed that he had not given himself the trouble to draw from original sources. Daniel had not chosen to fetter himself with truth. And Anquetil, in his dull, uninteresting narration, had succeeded in making the perusal of French history an insufferably weary task.

The spirit which had infused new life into poetry did the same for history. Chateaubriand, in his *MARTYRS*, had described in glowing colours the decay of the old world and the birth of the new. This was a novel revelation for the young generation of French students. Thierry describes, with all the charm of a remembrance of childhood, the impression that a page of this newly-published book made upon him. Like the novels of Walter Scott, it opened to enthusiastic youth a marvellous past wholly different from the present of their own experience, and fired their boyish imaginations with tales of great deeds and wondrous scenes.

The intelligence of older men, who had seen all Europe groaning in the throes of political convulsions, turned to history to satisfy themselves that humanity is not the sport of fate, and that there are laws in the moral world which men may indeed disobey, but cannot escape from.

This twofold tendency of the age,—the one of imagination, the other of intelligence,—produced under the Restoration two distinct classes of historians, descriptive

and philosophic, the first of which aimed at a faithful reproduction of past events, while the second sought in those events the chain of cause and effect, and found in them food for deep reflection. Thus was reproduced in the sphere of history the ever irreconcilable principles of empirism and idealism.

Guizot<sup>6</sup> was at the head of the philosophic school. His lectures at the Sorbonne, published in substance in his *HISTOIRE DE LA CIVILIZATION*, did not draw such crowded audiences as those of Villemain and Cousin, but the impression they made was none the less profound. His colleagues were orators: he was simply a teacher, and avoided with puritanical austerity any flower of rhetoric or passionate declamation. He neither narrated nor painted, he confined himself to explanation. His lectures were didactic, not dramatic. The philosophic school wilfully broke the tie which in history as in art binds together idea and fact, soul and body, and only cared to wring from fact the idea which it enclosed,—a chemical process demanding learning and accuracy, but which, like all similar processes, destroys in the very act of analysis.

Guizot's historical works are very numerous. In politics he was a Constitutional Royalist, and, though he had taken office under Louis XVIII., he was expelled from it after the assassination of the Duc de Berri. His lectures were suspended by the Government. Under the Ministry of M. de Martignac, these lectures were resumed, and there is no doubt that the lecturer was very influential in bringing about the Revolution which placed the Citizen-King on the throne of the absolute Bourbons.

If the philosophical school in its effort to appeal to the intellect lost sight of the imagination, the descriptive in its appeal to the imagination appeared to forget the

<sup>6</sup> Born at Nîmes, 1787.

intellect. The narrations of the latter school form no conclusion; their pictures fail to instruct. With them history is a deeply interesting romance, not a study of mankind which educates the mind.

The most completely representative historian of this school is M. de Barante,<sup>7</sup> whose *HISTOIRE DES DUCS DE BOURGOGNE* recalls the old chronicler Froissart. Great deeds of prowess and great feats of arms fill its pages; there is nothing abstract and ideal—all is real and individual. The writer falls into the error of the pseudo-classical school, who sought to reproduce the very mode of thought and speech of Livy, Sallust, or Tacitus. Barante does but change the age and worthiness of his models, and it need hardly be remarked such imitation is not wholly possible. It is inevitable but that the personal thought and labour of the writer, his opinions and those of the time in which he lives, should tinge the narration, and make it more or less unlike the simple recital of the contemporary chronicler. It is impossible, too, that an author should abstain from any reflection on the facts he is considering, and if, in making such reflection, he errs, his faults will be more full of danger for the unwitting reader, who will probably fail to ascribe them to their true source.

The book of M. de Barante cannot, however, fail to delight, and is undoubtedly a work of great merit.

Augustin Thierry<sup>8</sup> may be said to have belonged to both historical schools. His *LETTRES SUR L'HISTOIRE DE FRANCE*, a reprint of his letters in the *COURRIER FRANÇAIS*, are partly critical and partly narrative. His *HISTOIRE DE LA CONQUÊTE D'ANGLETERRE PAR LES NORMANDS*

<sup>7</sup> Born at Riom 1871; died 1866. His other work is *DE LA LITTÉRATURE PENDANT LE DIX-HUITIÈME SIÈCLE*.

<sup>8</sup> Born at Blois, 1795; died 1856.

is full of brilliant and animated description, and displays both acumen and reflection. His *RÉCITS DES TEMPS MÉROVINGIENS, PRÉCÉDÉS DES CONSIDÉRATIONS SUR L'HISTOIRE DE FRANCE*, published after his loss of sight, was crowned by the Academy. With the help of his elder brother, Amédée Thierry, Professor of History at Besançon, he composed his *DIX ANS D'ÉTUDES HISTORIQUES*, and, in addition to this, he assisted this same brother in the publication of many of his historical works.<sup>9</sup> Augustin Thierry said of himself that his vocation was to write history, and his labours never flagged. In his almost total blindness of many years, he was tenderly and efficiently helped along in his self-chosen course by his wife,<sup>1</sup> the clever essayist of the *REVUE DES DEUX MONDES*, and the author of *SCÈNES DE MŒURS AUX 18ME ET 19ME SIÈCLES*.

Like Augustin Thierry, the profoundly erudite Sismondi<sup>2</sup> was sometimes a follower of the philosophical, sometimes of the descriptive, school. His works are numerous, his *RÉPUBLIQUES ITALIENNES* is that which has made him most famous. He is said to have conceived the idea of it during a journey through Italy, the home of his ancestors, with the accomplished authoress of *CORINNE*. His *HISTOIRE DES FRANÇAIS* is his longest, and is by some considered his best work. It extends from Merovingian times to the year 1750, and occupied, though not entirely, twenty-three years of the author's life. It was begun in 1819, and three days before his death, in 1842, he was employed in correcting some of its proofs.

<sup>9</sup> Born at Blois, 1797; died March 1873—a frequent contributor to the *REVUE DES DEUX MONDES*; author of *HISTOIRE DE LA GAULE SOUS LA DOMINATION ROMAINE*; *RÉSUMÉ DE L'HISTOIRE DE LA GUIENNE*; *HISTOIRE D'ATTILA*, &c.; *HISTOIRE DES GAULOIS JUSQU'À LA SOUMISSION DE LA GAULE*.

<sup>1</sup> Julie Thierry, died 1844.

<sup>2</sup> Born at Geneva, 1773; died 1842.



His wife was an Englishwoman, and he furnished an abridgment in English of his *RÉPUBLIQUES FRANÇAISES* to LARDNER'S *CABINET CYCLOPÆDIA*, and himself revised the English translation of his *HISTOIRE DES FRANÇAIS*.

Michelet<sup>3</sup> is a true philosopher of history. In every phenomenon he seeks to discover the ruling law, and in his powerful generalisations he strives to derive all history from ideas, as consequences result from principles. His descriptions display great power of imagination, and he, no less than Thierry and Sismondi, forms a link between the two opposing schools of historians.

When our history brings us down to the distinguished and yet vigorous author of the *HISTOIRE DE LA RÉVOLUTION FRANÇAISE*, we feel that our task is well nigh done, and we look onward to some future historian, who shall write the history of that French Republic of which Adolphe Thiers<sup>4</sup> is the head. The aged President, so unflinching in his determination to be faithful to the trust his fellow-countrymen have committed to him, is no less unswervingly faithful as a historian to the severe truth of history, and is no less positive and determined in his views of bygone deeds than in his daily conduct of his country's affairs.

With his name we will close the list of historians. There are many others well worthy to be mentioned, but in a work of this size we must content ourselves with merely indicating the most illustrious, the representatives of a new idea or a new tendency.

<sup>3</sup> Born in Paris, 1798 ;

<sup>4</sup> Born at Marseilles (1797) in humble circumstances.

## CONCLUSION.

THE long lives of some of the authors who illustrated French literature in the early part of this century have brought us far beyond our self-appointed term of the Restoration to our own day. But with the Restoration our history must close. A bare catalogue of names and works would swell it to more than twice its intended size.

We have seen the rise and progress of the Romantic School—the birth and death of the *Muse Française*. The *Cénacle*, the literary club whose members were all determined Romanticists, was violently attacked by the Classical School; and in 1829 a request was preferred by seven men of letters—Baour-Lormian, Jouy, Arnault, Étienne, and others—to Charles X. to exclude from the *Théâtre Française* all pieces tinged with romanticism. The king wisely refused the request, and the young school went bravely on. The *Cénacle* recalled the *Pléiade*, only that the latter had scoffed at the Middle Ages, and set up the standard of Classicism, while the former, disgusted with the false taste of the pseudo-classical school, looked to the Middle Ages for the inspiration which was to reform French letters.

The preface of Victor Hugo's CROMWELL was the manifesto of the *Cénacle*. In it the author made three divisions of time,—primitive ages, antiquity, modern times; and three divisions of poetry,—ode, epopee, and drama. Like Göthe, he only acknowledged one of the three unities,—the *ensemble*; and he turned the Classical School into ridicule. He erred on the side of a too intense realism,—a necessary reaction possibly from the exaggerated idealism of the Classicists,—and certainly the

somewhat confused syncretism of the Romanticists had at least the good effect of widening the gates of art, and of admitting within them man as he really is, instead of the pale lifeless abstraction of pseudo-classical poetry.

Not satisfied with thus throwing down the gauntlet, Victor Hugo prepared to join issues with the Classicists on the arena of the *Théâtre Français*. On the 25th February 1830, *HERNANI* was acted for the first time. By two o'clock in the afternoon of that day, pit and gallery were filled to overflowing by enthusiastic *rapins* and gushing young Bohemians of the *Quartier Latin*, determined to do what they could to exclude unappreciative Philistines and intolerant *periwigs*<sup>5</sup> from the celebration of the "hymen of the grotesque and the sublime."

Victor Hugo was the idol of the artistic youth of Paris,—poets, painters, architects, designers,—who, after the production of *HERNANI*, formed themselves into a club, called, in distinction to the older one of which we have spoken, *Le Petit Cénacle*. This club, little respectable in its doings, and more than suspected in its morals, did much for both art and literature, and completed the revolution the earlier *Cénacle* had begun.

Romanticism was the liberalism of literature. "The greater part of the poets," says Sainte Beuve,<sup>6</sup> himself a Romanticist, in his charming *CAUSERIES DE LUNDI*, "gave themselves up, without control or restraint, to all the instincts of their nature, and also to all the pretensions of their pride, and even to all the follies of their vanity." Yet France owes to them a richer lyric poetry than she had ever before possessed, which, indeed, though their aim was the drama, is the great glory of their school.

<sup>5</sup> The nickname given to the Classicists.

<sup>6</sup> T. i. p. 208.

The Revolution of 1830 once more drew public attention for a time from the peaceful pursuits of literature, and closed another period in her history. With it we too must end ; for the French press, during the reign of Louis Philippe and the prosperous years of the Second Empire, was so prolific in every branch of letters,—in science, in philosophy, in history, and in poetry, in works of research and works of imagination,—that the slightest sketch would fill a volume much larger than that in our hands.

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these too far apart, and the intercourse of the defenders with an army of relief under the Count of Clermont at Blois was not broken off. Early in the following year, this army hoped to raise the siege by falling on a large body of provisions coming to the besiegers from Paris under Sir John Fastolf. The attack was made at Rouvray, but Fastolf had made careful preparations. The waggons were arranged in a square, and, with the stakes of the archers, formed a fortification on which the disorderly attack of the French made but little impression. Broken in the assault, they fell an easy prey to the English, as they advanced beyond their lines. The skirmish is known by the name of the Battle of the Herrings. This victory, which deprived the besieged of hope of external succour, seemed to render the capture of the city certain.

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susceptible to such influences, and from the time she was thirteen years old, she had fancied that she heard voices, and had even seen forms, sometimes of the Archangel Michael, sometimes of St. Catherine and St. Margaret, who called her to the assistance of the Dauphin. She persuaded herself that she was destined to fulfil an old prophecy which said that the kingdom, destroyed by a woman—meaning, as she thought, Queen Isabella,—should be saved by a maiden of Lorraine. The burning of Domrémy in the summer of 1428 by a troop of Burgundians at length gave a practical form to her imaginations, and early in the following year she succeeded in persuading Robert of Baudricourt to send her, armed and accompanied by a herald, to Chinon. She there, as it is said by the wonderful knowledge she displayed, convinced the court of the truth of her mission. At all events, it was thought wise to take advantage of the infectious enthusiasm she displayed, and in April she was intrusted with an army of 6000 or 7000 men, which was to march up the river from Blois to the relief of Orleans. When she appeared upon the scene of war, she supplied exactly that element of success

of all of them open by two slits turned towards the centre of the flower. Their stalks have expanded and joined together, so as to form a thin sheath round the central column (fig. 12). The dust-



Fig. 12.  
Dust-spikes of gorse (*enlarged*).

spikes are so variable in length in this flower, that it may not be possible to see that one short one comes between two long ones, though this ought to be the case.

The *seed-organ* is in the form of a longish rounded pod, with a curved neck, stretching out beyond the dust-spikes. The top of it is sticky, and if you look at a bush of gorse, you will see it projecting beyond the keel in most of the fully-blown flowers, because the neck has become more curved than in fig. 12. Cut open the pod; it contains only one cavity (not, as that of the wall-flower, two separated by a thin partition), and the grains are suspended by short cords from the top (fig. 13). These grains may be plainly seen in the seed-organ of even a young flower. It is evident that they are the most important part of the plant, as upon them depends its diffusion and multiplication. We have already seen how carefully their well-being is considered in the matter of their perfection, how even insects are pressed into their service for this purpose! Now let us glance again at our flower, and see how wonderfully contrivance is heaped upon contrivance for their protection!



Fig. 13.  
Split seed-pod of gorse.

First (see fig. 10, p. 14), we have the outer covering, so covered with hairs, that it is as good for keeping out rain as a waterproof cloak; in the buttercup, when you pressed the bud, it separated into five leaves; here there are five leaves, just the same, but they are so tightly joined that you may press till the whole bud is bent without making them separate at all, and when the bud is older, they only separate into two, and continue to enfold the flower to a certain extent till it fades. When the flower pushes back its waterproof cloak, it has the additional shelter of the



struction, and at last, after nearly twenty years of alternate hopes and fears, of tedious negotiations, official evasions, and sterile Parliamentary debates, it was effectually extinguished by the adverse report of a Parliamentary Committee, followed by the erection of the present Millbank Penitentiary at a vastly greater expense and on a totally different system.

**Transportation.**—In the meantime the common gaols were relieved in a makeshift fashion by working gangs of prisoners in hulks at the seaports; but the resource mainly relied on for getting rid of more dangerous criminals was the old one of transportation, Botany Bay having succeeded to America. As at first employed, there was no mistake as to the reality of the punishment; the misfortune was that the worst elements in the real were not so made known as to form any part of the apparent punishment. If the judge, in sentencing the convict, had thought fit to explain, for the warning of would-be offenders, exactly what was going to be done with their associate, the sentence would have been something of this sort: “You shall first be kept, for days or months as it may happen, in a common gaol, or in the hulks, in company with other criminals better or worse than yourself, with nothing to do, and every facility for mutual instruction in wickedness. You shall then be taken on board ship with similar associates of both sexes, crammed down between decks, under such circumstances that about one in ten of you will probably die in the course of the six months’ voyage. If you survive the voyage you will either be employed as a slave in some public works, or let out as a slave to some of the few free settlers whom we have induced to go out there. In either case you will be under very little regular inspection, and will have every opportunity of indulging those natural

*Relation to the Barbarians of the East* 203 ✓

wealth into the treasury. Churches remained open day and night, and frequent addresses kept up the enthusiasm to a high pitch. It was (for the moment) a genuine "revival" or reawakening of the whole Roman world. The occasion, too, appeared favourable. Italy was quiet, and the Exarchate at peace with its neighbours. Clotaire the Frank was no enemy to Heraclius, and in common with his clergy (being orthodox and not Arian) might be expected to sympathise in so holy a cause.

**Treachery of the Avars—A.D. 616.**—In one quarter only was there room for fear. The Avars were on the Danube, and the turbulence of the Avars was only equalled by their perfidy. Already, in A.D. 610, they had fallen suddenly on North Italy, and pillaged and harassed those same Lombards whom they had before helped to destroy the Gepidæ. Previous to an absence, therefore, of years from his capital, it was essential for the Emperor to sound their intentions, and, if possible, to secure their neutrality. His ambassadors were welcomed with apparent cordiality, and an interview was arranged between the Chagan and Heraclius. The place was to be Heraclea. At the appointed time the Emperor set out from Selymbria to meet the Khan, decked with Imperial crown and mantle to honour the occasion. The escort was a handful of soldiers; but there was an immense cortège of high officials and of the fashionable world of Constantinople, and the whole country side was there to see. Presently some terrified peasants were seen making their way hurriedly towards Heraclius. They urged him to flee for his life; for armed Avars had been seen in small bodies, and might even now be between him and the capital. Heraclius knew too much to hesitate. He threw off his robes and fled, and but just in time. The Chagan had laid a deep plot. A large mass of men had been told off in small detachments

I say the pulpit (in the sober use  
 Of its legitimate peculiar pow'rs)  
 Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand,  
 The most important and effectual guard,  
 Support and ornament of virtue's cause.  
 There stands the messenger of truth : the.e stands  
 The legate of the skies ; his theme divine,  
 His office sacred, his credentials clear.  
 By him, the violated law speaks out 340  
 Its thunders, and by him, in strains as sweet  
 As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.  
 He establishes the strong, restores the weak,  
 Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart,  
 And, arm'd himself in panoply complete  
 Of heav'nly temper, furnishes with arms  
 Bright as his own, and trains, by ev'ry rule  
 Of holy discipline, to glorious war,  
 The sacramental host of God's elect.  
 Are all such teachers? would to heav'n all were ! 350  
 But hark—the Doctor's voice—fast wedged between  
 Two empirics he stands, and with swoln cheeks  
 Inspires the news, his trumpet. Keener far  
 Than all invective is his bold harangue,  
 While through that public organ of report  
 He hails the clergy ; and, defying shame,  
 Announces to the world his own and theirs.  
 He teaches those to read, whom schools dismiss'd,  
 And colleges, untaught ; sells accent, tone,  
 And emphasis in score, and gives to pray'r 360  
 Th' *adagio* and *andante* it demands.  
 He grinds divinity of other days  
 Down into modern use ; transforms old print  
 To zigzag manuscript, and cheats the eyes  
 Of gall'ry critics by a thousand arts.—  
 Are there who purchase of the Doctor's ware?  
 Oh name it not in Gath !—it cannot be,  
 That grave and learned Clerks should need such aid.  
 He doubtless is in sport, and does but droll,  
 Assuming thus a rank unknown before, 370  
 Grand caterer and dry-nurse of the church.

I venerate the man whose heart is warm,  
 Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life.

gether as with a close seal. . . . The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved."

Hobbes, in his famous book to which he gave the title *Leviathan*, symbolised thereby the force of civil society, which he made the foundation of all right.

315-325 Cowper's limitation of the province of satire—that it is fitted to laugh at foibles, not to subdue vices—is on the whole well-founded. But we cannot forget Juvenal's famous "*facit indignatio versum*," or Pope's no less famous—

"Yes, I am proud: I must be proud to see  
Men not afraid of God, afraid of me:  
Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,  
Yet touched and shamed by ridicule alone."

326-372 *The pulpit, not satire, is the proper corrector of sin. A description of the true preacher and his office, followed by one of the false preacher, "the reverend advertiser of engraved sermons."*

330 *Strutting and vapouring.* Cf. *Macbeth*, v. 5.

"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing."

"And what in real value's wanting,  
Supply with vapouring and ranting."—HUDIBRAS.

331 *Proselyte.* *προήλυτος*, a new comer, a convert to Judaism.

338 *His theme divine.* Nominative absolute.

343 *Stablishes.* Notice the complete revolution the word has made—*stabilire, établir, establish, stablish*; cf. *state*, &c.

346 *Of heavenly temper.* Cf. *Par. Lost*, i. 284, "his ponderous shield ethereal temper." See note on *Winter Morning Walk*, l. 664.

349 *Sacramental.* Used in the Latin sense. *Sacramentum* was the oath of allegiance of a Roman soldier. The word in its Christian sense was first applied to baptism—the vow to serve faithfully under the banner of the cross. See *Browne on the Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 576.

350 *Would to heaven.* A confusion between "would God" and "I pray to heaven."

351 A picture from the life of a certain Dr Trusler, who seems to have combined the trades of preacher, teacher of elocution, writer of sermons, and literary hack.

352 *Empirics.* *ἐμπειρικός*, one who trusts solely to experience or practice instead of rule, hence a quack. The accent is the same as in *Milton* (an exception to the rule. See note on *Sofa*, l. 52).

thus: if the articles had cost £1 each, the total cost would have been £2478;

∴ as they cost  $\frac{1}{2}$  of £1 each, the cost will be £ $\frac{2478}{2}$ , or £413.

The process may be written thus:

3s. 4d. is  $\frac{1}{2}$  of £1 | £2478 = cost of the articles at £1 each.  
 £413 = cost ..... at 3s. 4d. ...

Ex. (2). Find the cost of 2897 articles at £2. 12s. 9d. each.

£2 is 2 × £1	2897 . 0 . 0 = cost at £1 each.
10s. is $\frac{1}{2}$ of £1	5794 . 0 . 0 = ..... £2 ....
2s. is $\frac{1}{5}$ of 10s.	1448 . 10 . 0 = ..... 10s. ....
8d. is $\frac{1}{3}$ of 2s.	289 . 14 . 0 = ..... 2s. ....
1d. is $\frac{1}{8}$ of 8d.	96 . 11 . 4 = ..... 8d. ....
	12 . 1 . 5 = ..... 1d. ....
	£7640 . 16 . 9 = ..... £2. 12s. 9d. each.

NOTE.—A shorter method would be to take the parts thus:

10s. =  $\frac{1}{2}$  of £1; 2s. 6d. =  $\frac{1}{4}$  of 10s.; 3d. =  $\frac{1}{10}$  of 2s. 6d.

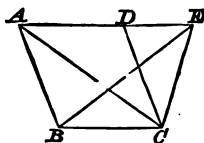
Ex. (3). Find the cost of 425 articles at £2. 18s. 4d. each.

Since £2. 18s. 4d. is the difference between £3 and 1s. 8d. (which is  $\frac{1}{2}$  of £1), the shortest course is to find the cost at £3 each, and to *subtract from it* the cost at 1s. 8d. each, thus:

£3 is 3 × £1	£ 425 . 0 . 0 = cost at £1 each.
1s. 8d. is $\frac{1}{2}$ of £1	1275 . 0 . 0 = ..... £3 ....
	35 . 8 . 4 = ..... 1s. 8d. each.
	£1239 . 11 . 8 = ..... £2. 18s. 4d. each.

## PROPOSITION XLI. THEOREM.

*If a parallelogram and a triangle be upon the same base, and between the same parallels, the parallelogram is double of the triangle.*



Let the  $\square ABCD$  and the  $\triangle EBC$  be on the same base  $BC$  and between the same  $\parallel$ s  $AE, BC$ .

*Then must  $\square ABCD$  be double of  $\triangle EBC$ .*

Join  $AC$ .

Then  $\triangle ABC = \triangle EBC$ ,  $\therefore$  they are on the same base and between the same  $\parallel$ s ;

I. 37.

and  $\square ABCD$  is double of  $\triangle ABC$ ,  $\therefore AC$  is a diagonal of  $ABCD$  ;

I. 34.

$\therefore \square ABCD$  is double of  $\triangle EBC$ .

Q. E. D.

**Ex. 1.** If from a point, without a parallelogram, there be drawn two straight lines to the extremities of the two opposite sides, between which, when produced, the point does not lie, the difference of the triangles thus formed is equal to half the parallelogram.

**Ex. 2.** The two triangles, formed by drawing straight lines from any point within a parallelogram to the extremities of its opposite sides, are together half of the parallelogram.

## CARBONIC ANHYDRIDE.

33

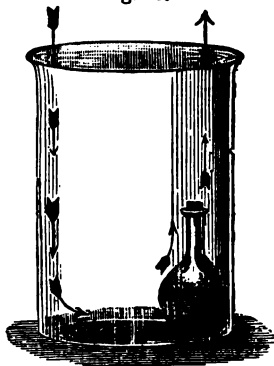
Sometimes carbonic anhydride is produced in wells, and, being so much heavier than air, it remains at the bottom. If a man goes down into such a well, he will have no difficulty at first, because the air is good; but when he is near the bottom, where the gas has accumulated, he will gasp for breath and fall; and if anyone, not understanding the cause of his trouble, goes down to assist him, he too will fall senseless, and both will quickly die. The way to ascertain whether carbonic anhydride has accumulated at the bottom of a well is to let a light down into it. If it goes out, or even burns very dimly, there is enough of the gas to make the descent perilous. A man going down a well should always take a candle with him, which he should hold a considerable distance below his mouth. If the light burns dimly, he should at once stop, before his mouth gets any lower and he takes some of the gas into his lungs.

When this gas is in a well or pit, of course it must be expelled before a man can descend. There are several expedients for doing this. One is to let a bucket down frequently, turning it upside down, away from the mouth of the well, every time it is brought up, a plan which will remind you of the experiment represented in Fig. 24.

But a better way is to let down a bundle of burning straw or shavings, so as to heat the gas. Now heated bodies expand, gases very much more than solids or liquids, and, in expanding, the weight of a certain volume, say of a gallon, becomes lessened. So that if we can *heat the carbonic anhydride enough*

*to make a gallon of it weigh less than a gallon of air, it will rise out of the well just as hydrogen gas would do. Fig. 25 shows how you may perform this experiment upon a small scale.*

Fig. 25.



*DISASTROUS RETREAT OF THE ENGLISH FROM CABUL.*

**I**T took two days of disorder, suffering, and death to carry the army, now an army no more to the jaws of the fatal pass. Akbar Khan, who appeared like the Greeks' dread marshal from the spirit-land at intervals upon the route, here demanded four fresh hostages. The demand was acquiesced in. Madly along the narrow defile crowded the undistinguishable host, whose diminished numbers were still too numerous for speed : on every side rang the war-cry of the barbarians : on every side plundered and butchered the mountaineers : on every side, palsied with fatigue, terror, and cold, the soldiers dropped down to rise no more. The next day, in spite of all remonstrance, the general halted his army, expecting in vain provisions from Akbar Khan. That day the ladies, the children, and the married officers were given up. The march was resumed. By the following night not more than one-fourth of the original number survived. Even the haste which might once have saved now added nothing to the chances of life. In the middle of the pass a barrier was prepared. There twelve officers died sword in hand. A handful of the bravest or the strongest only reached the further side alive : as men hurry for life, they hurried on their way, but were surrounded and cut to pieces, all save a few that had yet escaped. Six officers better mounted or more fortunate than the rest, reached a spot within sixteen miles of the goal ; but into the town itself rode painfully on a jaded steed, with the stump of a broken sword in his hand, but one.

LIVY, *xxi.* c. 25, § 7-10. *xxxv.* c. 30. *xxiii.* c. 24.

CÆSAR, *Bell. Gall.* v. c. 35-37.

*DEFEAT OF CHARLES THE BOLD AND MASSACRE OF HIS TROOPS AT MORAT.*

**I**N such a predicament braver soldiers might well have ceased to struggle. The poor wretches, Italians and Savoyards, thousand or more in number, threw away their arms and



II.

ARIADNE'S LAMENT.

Madam, 'twas Ariadne passioning  
For Theseus' perjury and unjust flight.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA, IV. 4, 272.

ARGUMENT.

**ARIADNE** tells the story of her first waking, to find herself abandoned by Theseus and left on an unknown island, exposed to a host of dangers.—(HEROIDES, x.)

The story is beautifully told by Catullus, in the "*Epithalamium Pelci et Thetidos*:" it also forms one of the episodes in Chaucer's "*Legende of Goode Women*."

*I woke before it was day to find myself alone, no trace of my companions to be seen. In vain I felt and called for Theseus; the echoes alone gave me answer.*

	QUAE legis, ex illo, Theseu, tibi litore mitto,	
	Unde tuam sine me vela tulere ratem :	
	In quo me somnusque meus male prodidit et tu,	
	Per facinus somnis insidiate meis.	107
	Tempus erat, vitrea quo primum terra pruina	112
	Spargitur et tectae fronde queruntur aves :	
	Incertum vigilans, a somno languida, movi	97
	Thesea prensuras semisupina manus :	
	Nullus erat, referoque manus, iterumque retempto,	
10	Perque torum moveo brachia : nullus erat.	
	Excussere metus somnum : conterrita surgo,	
	Membraque sunt viduo praecipitata toro.	123
	Protinus adductis sonuerunt pectora palmis,	111
	Utque erat e somno turbida, rapta coma est.	
	Luna fuit : specto, siquid nisi litora cernam ;	
	Quod videant, oculi nil nisi litus habent.	150
	Nunc huc, nunc illuc, et utroque sine ordine curro ;	
	Alta puellares tardat arena pedes.	
	Interea toto clamanti litore "Theseu !"	121
20	Reddebant nomen concava saxa tuum,	
	Et quoties ego te, toties locus ipse vocabat :	
	Ipse locus miserae ferre volebat opem.	108 3

STORIES FROM OVID.

174. **Punica poma**, pomegranates.  
 178. **Taenarum**, at the southern extremity of Peloponnesus, was one of the numerous descents to Tartarus. Cf. Virgil, Georg. IV. 467 :  
     Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis.  
 179. **Factura fuit**. This periphrasis for *fecisset* is to be noted ; it is the one from which the oblique forms are all constructed, e.g., *facturam fuisse*, or *factura fuisset*.  
 183. **Cessatis**, one of a goodly number of intransitive verbs of the first conjugation which have a passive participle. Cf. *erratas*, above, 139, *clamata*, 35. So Horace, *regnata Phalanto rura* (Odes, II. 6, 12) ; *triumphatae gentes* (Virgil).

II.—IV.

ARIADNE.

THIS and the two following extracts, though taken from different works, form a definite sequence. Ariadne, daughter of Minos, king of Crete, has helped Theseus to conquer the Minotaur, by giving him a clew to the maze in which the monster was hid, and, being in love with him, has fled in his company. They put in for the night to the island of Dia, and Theseus on the next morning treacherously sails away, leaving the poor girl alone. The first extract is part of an epistle which she is supposed to write on the day when she discovers his perfidy.

The name Dia, which belonged properly to a small island off the north coast of Crete, was also a poetical name for Naxos, one of the largest of the Cyclades. It may have been this fact which led to the further legend which is recounted in the next extract, how Ariadne, lorn of Theseus, becomes the bride of Bacchus ; for Naxos was the home of the Bacchic worship. As the completion of the legend she is raised to share in Bacchus' divine honours, and as the Cretan Crown becomes one of the signs of the heavens.

II.

ARIADNE'S LAMENT.

1. **Illo**, sc. *Diae*.
4. **Per facinus**, criminally.
5. Describing apparently the early dawn, or the hour that precedes it, when the night is at its coldest, and the birds, half-awake, begin to stir in their nests. *Fruina* hints that it is autumn.
7. A beautifully descriptive line—But half-awake, with all the languor of sleep still on me.  
     **A somno** = after, as the *result* of.
8. **Semisupina**, on my side, lit., half on my back, describes the motion of a person thus groping about on waking. Cf. Chaucer :

Ryght in the dawaynge awaketh shee,  
 And gropeth in the bed, and fonde ryghte noghte.

55 haec mea magna fides? at non, Euandre, pudendis  
volneribus pulsum aspicies, nec sospite dirum  
optabis nato funus pater. ei mihi, quantum  
praesidium Ausonia, et quantum tu perdis, Iule!

**Haec ubi deflevit, tolli miserabile corpus**

60 imperat, et toto lectos ex agmine mittit  
mille viros, qui supremum comitentur honorem,  
intersintque patris lacrimis, solacia luctus  
exigua ingentis, misero set debita patri.  
haut segnes alii crates et molle feretrum

65 arbuteis texunt virgis et vimine querno,  
extractosque toros obtentu frondis inumbrant.  
hic iuvenem agresti sublimem stramine ponunt;  
qualem virgineo demessum pollice florem  
seu mollis violae, seu languentis hyacinthi,

70 cui neque fulgor adhuc, nec dum sua forma recessit ;  
non iam mater alit tellus, viresque ministrat.  
tunc geminas vestes auroque ostroque rigentis  
extulit Aeneas, quas illi laeta laborum  
ipsa suis quondam manibus Sidonia Dido

75 fecerat, et tenui telas discreverat auro.  
harum unam iuveni supremum maestus honorem  
induit, arsurasque comas obnubit amictu ;  
multaque praeterea Laurentis praemia pugnae  
aggerat, et longo praedam iubet ordine duci.

80 addit equos et tela, quibus spoliaverat hostem.  
vinxerat et post terga manus, quos mitteret umbris  
inferias, caeso sparsuros sanguine flammam;  
*indutosque iubet truncos hostilibus armis*  
*ipsos ferre duces, inimicaque nomina figi.*

35 ducitur infelix aevo confectus Acoetes,  
pectora nunc foedans pugnis, nunc unguibus ora;

Comp. *Geor.* ii. 80, *Nec longum tempus et . . . exiit . . . arbor*, C. But as these are the only two instances of the construction adduced it is perhaps safer to take *et* = even.

51 *nūl iam*, etc.] The father is making vows to heaven in his son's behalf, but the son is gone where vows are neither made nor paid.

55 *haec mea magna fides*] 'Is this the end of all my promises?' *Magna* may be taken as 'solemn,' or 'boastful.'

*pudendis vulneribus*] All his wounds are on his breast.

56 *dirum optabis funus = morti devovebis*. Compare the meaning of *dirae*, xii. 845.

59-99] A description of the funeral rites. Aeneas bids his last farewell.

59 *Haec ubi deflevit*] 'His moan thus made.' *De* in composition has two opposite meanings: (1) cessation from or removal of the fundamental ideas, as in *decreasco*, *dedoceo*, etc.; (2) (as here) in intensifying, as *debello*, *demiror*, *desaevio*.

61 *honorem*] *Honos* is used by V. for (1) a sacrifice, iii. 118; (2) a hymn, *Geor.* ii. 393; (3) beauty, *Aen.* x. 24; (4) the 'leafy honours' of trees, *Geor.* ii. 404; (5) funeral rites, vi. 333, and here. See below, *l.* 76.

63 *solatia*] In apposition to the whole sentence; whether it is nom. or acc. depends on how we resolve the principal sentence; here, though *solatia* applies to the whole sentence, its construction probably depends on the last clause, which we may paraphrase, *ut praesentes* (τὸ μετεῖναι) *sunt solatia*; therefore it is nom.

64 *crates et molle feretrum*] The bier of pliant osier: cf. *l.* 22.

66] Cf. Statius, *Theb.* vi. 55, *torus* et puerile feretrum.

*obtentu frondis*] 'A leafy canopy.' C. understands 'a layer of leaves.'

67 *agresti stramine*] 'The rude litter.'

68] Cf. ix. 435; *Il.* viii. 306,

μήκων δ' ὥς ἐτέρωσε κάρη βάλεν, ἥτις ἐνὶ κήπῳ  
καρπῷ βριθομένη νοτίῃσι τε εἰαρινῇσιν  
ὥς ἐτέρωσ' ἤμυσσε κάρη πύληκι βαρυθύν.

'Even as a flower,  
Poppy or hyacinth, on its broken stem  
Languidly raises its encumbered head.'—MILMAN.

69 *languentis hyacinthi*] The rhythm is Greek. The 'drooping hyacinth' is probably the *Lilium Martagon* or Turk's-cap lily, 'the sanguine flower inscribed with woe.'

70] 'That hath not yet lost its gloss nor all its native loveliness.' *Recessit* must apply to both clauses. 'If we suppose the two parts of the line to contain a contrast, the following line will lose much of its force,' C. Compare the well-known lines from the *Giaour*, 'He who hath bent him o'er the dead,' etc.

71] Contrast the force of *neque adhuc*, *nec dum*, and *non iam*: 'brightness not all gone,' 'the lines where beauty lingers,' and 'the sup and nurture of mother earth cut off once and for all.'

36. *ἵνα φάγῃ*] In modern Greek, which properly speaking has no infinitive, the sense of the infinitive is expressed by *νά* (*ἵνα*) with subjunctive (as in this passage), e.g. *ἐπιθυμῶ νά γράφῃ*, 'I wish him to write;' see Corfe's *Modern Greek Grammar*, p. 78. This extension of the force of *ἵνα* to oblique petition, and even to consecutive clauses, may be partly due to the influence of the Latin *ut*; cf. ch. xvi. 27, *ἔρωτῶ οὖν, πᾶτερ, ἵνα πέμψῃς*: see note on ch. iv. 3.

The following incident is recorded by St. Luke alone. Simon the Pharisee is not to be identified with Simon the leper, Matt. xxvi., Mark xiv. 3.

*ἀνεκλίθη*] The Jews had adopted the Roman, or rather Greek, fashion of reclining at meals—a sign of advancing luxury and of Hellenism, in which however even the Pharisee acquiesces.

37. *γυνή*] There is no proof that this woman was Mary Magdalene. But mediæval art has identified the two, and great pictures have almost disarmed argument in this as in other incidents of the gospel narrative.

38. *ἀλάβυστρον*] The neuter sing. is Hellenistic. The classical form is *ἀλάβαστρος* with a heteroclite plural *ἀλάβαστρα*, hence probably the late sing. *ἀλάβαστρον*. The grammarian stage of a language loves uniformity, Herod. iii. 20; Theocr. xv. 114:

*Συρίω δὲ μύρω χρύσει' ἀλάβαστρα.*

*στᾶσα παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ*] This would be possible from the arrangement of the triclinium.

39. *ἐγίνωσκεν αὐν*] 'Would (all the while) have been recognising.'

40. *χρεωφειλέται*] A late word; the form varies between *χρεωφειλέται* and *χρεοφειλέται*.

41. *δηνάριον*] The denarius was a silver coin originally containing ten ases (deni), afterwards, when the weight of the as was reduced, sixteen ases. Its equivalent modern value is reckoned at 7½d. But such calculations are misleading; it is more to the point to regard the denarius as an average day's pay for a labourer.

42. *μὴ ἐχόντων*] Because he saw that they had not.  
*ἐγαρίσατο*] Cf. v. 21.

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